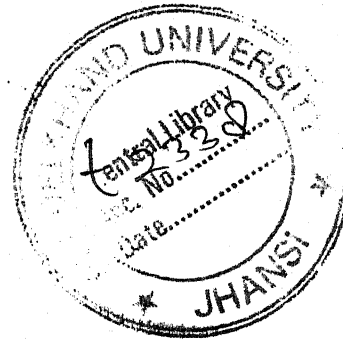
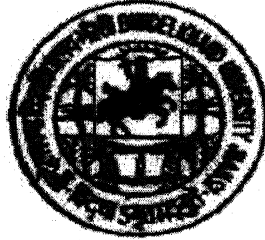


**“WOMEN AS SYMBOL OF SOCIAL CHANGE  
IN  
R.K. NARAYAN’S NOVELS”**



**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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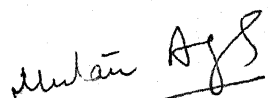
## *Certificate*

This is to certify that Ms. Atiya, has worked under my supervision on the topic "Women as Symbol of Social Change in R.K. Narayan's Novels.

I have gone through the manuscript carefully and as such can declare the thesis submitted by her is an original work on the part of candidate.

I wish her all success.

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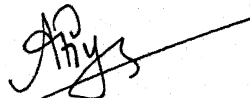
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(KM. ATIYA)



R.K. NARAYAN

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# **Chapter - 1**

## **R.K. Narayan's Genius in Characterization**

As is customary in Southern India, though now under western influence this has changed; one generally uses the name of one's village and that of one's father before one's name. R.K. Narayan's full name is Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyre Narayanaswami. R is for Rasipuram, a taluqa in the district of Salem in Tamilnadu, Narayan's ancestral village. Krishnanswami Iyre is his father's name and Narayanaswami is his own name. R.K. Narayan has cut short even Narayan-swami and uses only Narayan. For the same reason all of Narayan's brothers have the same first two names R.K. His ~~brothers~~ name was R.K. Laxman. Narayan was born on 10 October, 1906 in Madras which is now named Chennai. He was the third of eight surviving children. Soon after Narayan's birth his father was appointed headmaster in Government High School, Mysore. While other brothers and sisters of Narayan lived with their parents, he passed his childhood with his uncle and maternal grandmother Parvati, whom he called Ammani. His grandmother called him Kunjappa (the little one).

In his autobiography My Days; A Memoir, he has given a vivid account of his childhood, education and married life. Narayan's mother, Gnanambal, was very ill after his birth and enlisted a wet nurse to feed her young son. When she become pregnant again, two-year-old Narayan was sent to Madras to live with his maternal grandmother. He lived with her and one of 'his uncles, T.N. Seshachalam, until he was a teenager. He only spent

a few weeks each summer visiting his parents and siblings. Narayan grew up speaking the Tamil language and learned English at school. In his autobiography, My Days, Narayan writes of visiting his parents in Mysore and being unable to understand the shopkeepers, who spoke Kannada, a language he later learned. Thought Narayan's family belonged originally to Rasipuram, it had shifted long before his birth to Madras.

After completing eight years of education at the Lutheran Mission School close to his grandmother's house in Madras, he studied for a short time at the CRC High School, Mysore. He got his graduation degree when he was twenty four. This was because he <sup>er</sup> fails many times in High School and Intermediate examination. Narayan was an indifferent student and after graduation he failed the university entrance exam in English where he was most confident. His father was never annoyed about the examination results although he had austere views in academic matters, but he was also in the habit of showing sympathy for failed students. When he came to know of Narayan's failure in university entrance exam, he was constrained to exclaim in surprise,

“Stupid fellow ! You have failed in English. Why?”<sup>1</sup>

He retook the exam a year later and eventually obtained his bachelor's degree with history, economics, political science and literature from the university of Mysore in 1930. He found the primary textbooks too boring to

read. He told how his natural aversion to academic education was further strengthened whenever he studied Tangore's essays. But it does not mean that he had no fondness for studying. These failures at school and college level have made him nervous, hesitant and reserved. It is said that once he even tried to commit suicide. One of his short stories 'Iswaran' is based on this experience. The reasons were not far to seek as he himself points out about his mental abstractions.

“ ---- There was no use questioning me about my “doubts”. How could I tell the teacher, after he had lectured to us a whole morning, that I existed under a whole cloud of unknowing. My trouble was absolute abstraction from my surroundings. My mind was busy elsewhere – watching through the large windows the cows gazing in the field.”<sup>2</sup>

As academic education, religious education was given due importance as the most compulsive force in Narayan's family. But his own views on education generally never tallied with the accepted code at home. He tells us:

“I instinctively rejected both education and examinations with their unwarranted seriousness and esoteric suggestions. Since revolt was impractical, I

went through it all without conviction, enthusiasm, or any sort of distinction. Going to school seemed to be a never- ending nuisance.”<sup>3</sup>

After graduation Narayan’s father insistent that he should try to seek a job in the railways or in the bank. It was inconceivable for him to stay at home without a job. Life became full of problems for him. According to father’s advise Narayan tried to consult his friends in the matter of searching for a job but they proved fair – weather friends; and instead of any help they proved a burden and annoyance. In the meanwhile, Narayan’s father who was the only bread-earner for a number of family members, retired from service. It meant all sorts of re-adjustments at home. Dreaming of himself becoming a writer he moved to Bangalore from Mysore and started living with his grandmother, again under her care after a long time. How his dream came true he described in his memoir:

“On a certain day in September, selected by my grandmother for its auspiciousness, I brought an exercise book and wrote the first line of a novel, as I sat in a room nibbling my pen and wondering what to write, Malgudi with its railway station swami into view, all ready-made, with a character called Swaminathan running down the platform, peering into



the faces of passengers, and grimacing at a bearded face.”<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning he regularly wrote pages each day and this was satisfactory for him. He had already written a play called “Prince Yazid” the story of an independent-minded Mughal Prince who was tortured and tormented by his father. But it was returned to him after several decades from the office of his literary agent, David Higham, who had discovered it among the destroyable papers. It is obvious here that Narayan had always an ambition to be a writer as early as his school days. Narayan’s father did not like this idea so he advised him to become a teacher and continue to write simultaneously. In the meantime Narayan got a job of a Headmaster at Government High School Channapatna, situated fifty – nine kilometers from Bangalore on the way to Mysore where he had studied as a student and made ‘grasshopper collections.” But he failed to adjust here. He had no forbearance and judgment to tackle problems with the headmaster and the students as well.

“--- but Narayan’s first experience as a teacher soured him on that profession for life. He was paralysed with fear at the sight of the burly boys, was tongue-tied during lessons, and was insolent to his permissive headmaster, who merely asked him to stay with the

class, even when he had nothing to say, for a full period, rather than dismiss it after a few minutes. Narayan also balked at joining the civil service, because he was sure he had not the patience, the presence, or the discipline – the triple sine qua non of officialdom.”<sup>5</sup>

He decided to go back to Mysore and concentrate fully on completing his first novel, ‘Swami & Friends’. The most important event in his life took place 1935 when Narayan met his future wife Rajam at that time he was staying in Coimbatore. He saw a girl in a street and fell in love, immediately. She was about eighteen, tall and slim and had classical features; her face had the finished perfection of sculpture. Despite the rigid custom that marriage proposal should proceed between the elders of families. Narayan got acquainted with his father-in-law Mr. Nageshwara Iyre who loved books and was impressed on meeting him. Narayan made a bold and blunt announcement of his affection for his daughter. It was unconventional but Nageshwara Iyre impressed by his frankness and honesty and gave permission for their marriage. After a lot of fuss over the matching of horoscopes Narayan got married in 1934.

“The evil of Narayan’s stars was a matter of tense discussion but finally, a more favourable reading

having been obtained from another expert, the marriage took place.”<sup>6</sup>

Soon after Narayan marriage his father had a stroke so his mother spent her time to look after him. Rajam, the new wife, worked as her surrogate downstairs. She got on excellently with the family and they had a room in the house to themselves. Narayan was very happy in his peaceful life. For financial support he joined the Madras paper, ‘The Justice’ as a reporter. His working in newspaper was beneficial in supplying material for writing fictions and short stories and finally acquaintance with one’s personality, their relationship oddity and suffering. The marriage was happy one but short-lived. The shattering event was the death of his wife from typhoid, the same black year, which brought forth the Second World War. It was early June, 1939 the death of his wife meant to him the end of his life. Hema, the daughter of Narayan was hardly two years old, the only sign of their married life and the apple of their eyes. Narayan points out his experience in his novel ‘The English Teacher’:

“ The loss of my wife was sudden and not remotely anticipated by --- although my father-in-law had his doubt while looking into my horoscope earlier. But now I had to accept her death as a fact. --- Perhaps death may not be the end of everything as it seems –

personality may have other structures and other plains of existence, and the decay of physical body through disease or sterility may mean nothing more than a change of vehicle. This outlook may be unscientific, but it helped me survive the death of my wife --- I could somehow manage to live after her death and eventually, also attain a philosophical understanding.”<sup>7</sup>

A number of women characters in Narayan's novels bear close resemblance to his wife's character and personality. He has referred his personal experience in a number of novels. Sushila the heroine (Mrs. Rajam) and Lila (Narayan's daughter) of 'The English Teacher' are the characters taken from his own life. It was the time of short-lived happiness when Narayan got name, fame and money and published his three novels in quick succession – Swami & Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937) and The Dark Room (1938). Whether anyone believes or not the metaphysical experience which Narayan has portrayed in his fourth novel, 'The English Teacher' was his own experience as he himself points out in his memoir:

“Psychic experience seemed to have become a part of my normal life and thought. In a few months I became an adept - - - I could catch telepathic message or

transmit my thoughts to others; and I could generally sense what was coming ahead or anticipate what someone would say - - following the directions given, I practiced psychic contacts regularly for some years, almost every night. I found it possible to abstract from my physical body (a process taught by Paul Brunton) and experience a strange sense of deliverance.”<sup>8</sup>

This psychic experience brought a new change in Narayan's career and helped him to develop more artistic novels, which lead him on the honorable place in Indo-Anglican fiction. 'The English Teacher' was published in 1944 by Eyre and Spottiswood. It was his fourth novel. Though there was the range of the Second World War and the paper shortage had disrupted the printing of novels. At that time Graham Greene was the director of Eyre and Spottishsood, he managed to get the quota of paper for an edition of 3800 copies. During the gap of six years from the publication of 'The Dark Room' (1938) to 'The English Teacher' (1944) Narayan did not sit idly, he edited a journal 'The Indian Thought' and published three volumes of short stories Malgudi Days (1941), 'Dodu and Other Stories' (1943) and Cyclone and Other Stories (1944).

R.K. Narayan was a great novelist of India in the English Language. His novels possess greater artistic values and a wider appeal. He emerged as

a leading Indian novelist even during his college days; he was ambitious to become a writer. After a period of time, he succeeded in fulfilling his ambition. In an article published in The Illustrated Weekly of India by Vinay Kumar titled 'Meet R.K. Narayan'.

R.K. Narayan has a special method of characterization. He has created a vast array of characters. His characters do not grow in the course of action. He has successfully presented his characters alive and realistic. He has presented simple characters they are plain, considerate and kind. He allows his characters to speak and act freely and leave the rest to the fancy of the readers to judge their virtues or vices. He is fully aware of the difference between simple, odd and intricate characters. Jane Rustin says, his intricate characters lack happiness and iron will. Their ways and actions are sometimes mysterious to understand. Raju, Ramani and Margayya fall in the category of intricate characters. Narayan has successfully drawn his characters from the common people as his early novel Swami & Friends and later The Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room, The English Teacher, Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, Waiting for the Mahatma, The Guide, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, The Vendor of Sweets, The Painter of Sings, A Tiger for Malgudi, Talkative Man, The World of Nagaraj.

His early novel 'Swami and Friends', he has describe the young boys in school and showed their feelings and aspirations. The main character of

the novel Swami is a typical example of a young spirited boy. The character of 'Ramani and Savitri' in the novel 'The Dark Room' are very convincing and realistic. Improvement of characterization is seen in the later novels. Each character is properly individualized and realistically drawn.

Narayan has showed his great skill as a character delineator or in the field of English fiction. He has succeeded in making even his minor characters both convincing and lively. They have been selected from the various spheres of life. Like Dickens he discerns the oddities and peculiarities of a man's character. His characters are generally portrayed as individuals and not as types. Every character is typical of a class and does not lose his individuality. He used both analytical and dramatic methods in depicting his characters. In a few of his novels he portrays some odd and eccentric characters too.

According to Aristotle, 'Character is the soul of Tragedy.' But the same remark can be applied to the novel also. It is really through characterization that the talent of a novelist is measured. Narayan is a very devoted writer who relies considerably on artistic intuition, on a feeling for the appropriate gesture, attitude and action or remark in order to realize his characters personality. His 'Focus is on character' as he himself told Roland E. Wolseley:

“ I can write best when I do not plan the subject too elaborately --- All I can settle for myself is my protagonist's general type of personality. If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy for me: background and minor characters develop as I progress.”<sup>9</sup>

Once Mark Twain wrote:

“ if Byron - if any man - draws 50 characters, they are all himself 50 shades, 50 moods, of his own character. And when the man draws them well why do they stir my imagination? Because they are me - I recognize myself.”<sup>10</sup>

Unlike Twain Narayan has portrayed characters of his own life and surroundings. Narayan's characters with their quaint behaviour, exaggerated traits of their temperament and clumsy habits come quite close to those of Chaucer and Dickens. But whereas the oddities seem to have been appended to the adult characters of Chaucer and dickens from outside they go so well with Narayan's children.

The most appreciating quality of Narayan's young characters is that they are true to their nature Swami, Babu, Balu and other children who are



not only realistic but also unusual in nature. Dr. Ramesh K. Srivastava, highly appreciate Narayan portrayal of children he wrote :

“One can say about Narayan in praise of his portrayal of the childhood of his characters what some critics had said about Surdas, a Hindi poet, over his depiction of Krishna’s childhood that he must have seen the children’s activities with a million eyes.”<sup>11</sup>

Chandran (The Bachelor of Arts), Krishnan (The English Teacher), Margayya (The Financial Expert), Raju (The Guide), Vasu (The Man-Eater of Malgudi), Jagan (The Vendor of Sweets), Raman (The Painter of Sings) and Raja (A Tiger For Malgudi) veritably testify to this dominance of the main characters in his novels. He creates characters using his vivid imagination and keen observation of his surroundings. He told Hans Beerman how he chooses characters in his novels and short stories:

“They are partially based on local Mysore folk and acquaintance of mine – but not wholly I often build them up. However, I make no deliberate studies. Still, Mysore is a small enough place that lends itself to acute observation. It seems to me that more eccentric people live here than elsewhere.”<sup>12</sup>

If one visits Mysore one can easily find the characters of Narayan's novels literally existing there in the railway station, market places, sitting at shops and working in printing presses. He says how some family incidents and his own character had given him the concept of Raju and that Rosie and her husband Marco had a similar genesis. Narayan correlates life and art in such a persuasive manner that they are fused into one. His serious attention to life consists of its chief characteristics- sad, funny, ironic, incongruous, ridiculous, eccentric, emotional, romantic and holy. His fourth novel, 'The English Teacher' is more autobiographical than any other novel he has written so far. His 'Financial Expert' has the amalgamation of two-real-life persons whose exploits inspired and motivated him to gather the basic elements of Margayya's story. He

" - - - Considers his morning walk his office hours because he stops and talks to people, many of whom chat with him freely about their doings and their troubles - - - he observes their ways closely."<sup>13</sup>

This experience appears to have been finely represented in 'the Man-Eater of Malgudi' focusing on Natraj who begins his day in a well organized manner. Natraj tells:

"My day started before four in the morning. The streets would be quite dark when I set out to the river

for my ablutions. - - - All along the way I had my well-defined encounters. The milkman started on his rounds. - - - greeted me respectfully and asked, "what is the time master? " - - - a question I allowed to die without a reply - - - I simpered and let him pass suppressing the question."<sup>14</sup>

The heroes of Narayan behave quite realistically unlike Mulk Raj Anand he has tried to delineate tragic comic heroes in his novels. In his first novel 'Swami and Friends', he has presented a typical tragic comic hero. Some of his heroes deviate from the right path but realize their mistakes and revert to the accepted norm. He has selected his heroes from the common people. Like Dickens, Narayan heroines like Krishna's wife and Savitri represent the typical Indian house wife. In his very first novel 'Swami and Friends' (1935), Narayan has explored characters and built up an atmosphere. The important characters of the novel is Mani, Shanker, Somu, Samuel, Rajam and Mr. Ebenezar. He has given graphic description of the behavior of children at home, school and in the company of friends as well as their quarrels, vanities, grumbles and rivalries. His portrayal of child psychology is authentic. He has revealed all the aspects of child life through his character. Like Wordsworth he says: "The fullness of your bliss, I feel, I feel it all." Narayan has drawn brilliant picture of child life and child

psychology the hero of the novel 'Swami and Friends', Swaminathan or Swami, is a average school boy. Swami, who like Narayan, hates school and education, loves to spend time with his friends and live with his grandmother. She looked after his needs, taught him multiplication, the Tamil alphabet, Sanskrit slokas in praise of Goddess Saraswati. What was most important was that granny kept a strict watch on his behavior. The story of the novel moves round the juvenile activities of Swami and his friends, Mani, the mighty Good For Nothing; Sankar, the most intelligent boy of the class, Somu, the Monitor, Sammuel, the short-sized 'Pea'; and Rajam, the intelligent and talented son of the Police Superintendent posted at Malgudi. The world of young Swami consists mainly of his grandmother, his parents, his fellow students and his teachers. But Narayan mainly fixed attention on the trio, which includes Swami and his two friends Rajam and Mani. Rajam, who is the son of the S.P. and is directly creditable for the change in Swami's otherwise uneventful life. The Malgudian boys are impressed by Rajam's European dress, his way of talking and his style of living:

"He had impressed the whole class on the very first day, he dressed very well-he was the only boy in the class who wore socks and shoes, fur cap and tie, and a wonderful coat and knickers. He come to the school in a car...He spoke very god English, 'Exactly like a

“European””; which meant that few in the school could make out what he said of his class-mates could not trust themselves to speak to him, their fund of broken English being small.”<sup>15</sup>

The determined and self-assured Rajam is a foil to Swami in various matters and so also is the beefy block-head Mani. In the brightness of their friends their dissimilarity of class and character easily melt away. The annoyance in Swami is brought about by the comparison between his and Rajam’s way of life. When Rajam went to visit him, Swami was aware of his ordinary home. There also surface the mental and emotional strain between the old and the young; between the young and the not so young. Swaminathan finds:

“Staying at home in the evening was extremely irksome, but his father had forbidden him to go out till the examinations were over. He often felt he ought to tell his father what he thought of him. But somehow when one came near doing it, one failed.”<sup>16</sup>

Children are impatient against domination and young people are challenging the infallibility of parental desires. Infact Swami and Friends spread the seed of new generation to be shown grown up by the novelists. He gives as comprehensive account of the activities, thoughts, nature and life of

the school children. He has painted a world full of joy and happiness in this novel their petty quarrels, their hatred for Monday, their fear of ghosts, their rivalries and jokes, their anxieties on the approach of examinations and their apprehension of the elders are well portrayed. They tease one another and laugh at the follies of their teachers. They do not like to go to school and presented to be ill.

The Bachelor of Arts is Narayan's second novel. We can divide it into two parts. In the first part we can see Chandran's experiences in Albert College and his adventures after graduation. The important character of this period is Gajapathis lecturer of English. Chandran's parents, his girl friend Malathi, Susila is put very care fully in family environment. The other memorable character is Mohan, a poet and Chandran's friend.

The Dark Room is an elegy or morning on the misbalance and non-cooperation of domestic life. In the beginning of the novel, author has depicted Savitri's peaceful and normal family life. Mrs. Shanta Bai appointed as an organizer for improving business in her husband office. Her husband, Ramani becomes her doting lover and totally neglects Savitri and the children. She feels humiliated in the Ramani's household. She revolts and attempts suicide. In the end she returns home as a defeated woman and takes up her normal routine as a housewife and her husband's illegal relationship with his office colleague carries on as before.

Krishnan, the hero of *The English Teacher* was a product of a system of education. He believes in social freedom and independence of mind and was against the perpetuation of the system that crippled his imagination. He admired the wonderful writers of English literature but he could do so only at the cost of his creativity. He revolted against the British education and resign his job to maintain the freedom of conscience. He came under the spell of an old man who could establish contact with dead souls. Krishnan also learned that skill and started communing with the spirit of his beloved wife. The anonymous as well as insomniac Headmaster who runs an experimental school for the 'Leave Them Alone System' is the only other important character besides Krishnan's daughter Leela. His rejection of his own churlish wife and shabby and noisy children in addition to his preparation for the predicted death are in total contrast to Krishnan's happy married life. That remains happier even after the death of his wife. Undoubtedly headmaster is an amalgamation of absurdity and fantasy and hardly appears to be the creature of the real world.

Mr. Sampath and The Financial Expert bring out a very similar construction. The central theme of both novels is 'the interminable sequence of events related to attachment and the wheel of existence. Such a sequence is highlighted in 'The Bhagawad Gita' – thinking about sense objects is bound to attach man to sense objects. If he is attached, he shall be addicted; if

addition is thwarted, it is bound to give rise to anger; if he becomes angry, he will certainly confuse his mind. And confused mind will make him forget the lesson of experience. This forgetfulness will result in the unaccountable loss of discrimination. If discrimination is lost, life's only purpose is missed altogether. Both of them are obsessed with the ideas of woman and money. The former breaks away from the normal code of family and the later consider money as the only source of power to deal with the affairs of the world. Sampath shirks from his duty of a printer and gets lost in the vortex of film producing so as to bewilder Srinivas and close the journal 'The Banner'. Margayya becomes an extraordinary and abandons his job of a moneylender to peasants and embarks on a tempting mission of a publisher of 'The Science of Material Happiness'. He comes under the influence of Dr. Pal who is the real author of 'The Science of Material Happiness'. Both Sampath and Margayya are sadder, and in the end are forced by circumstances to return to normalcy and accept life as it is.

Waiting for the Mahatma is not a political novel, although Narayan has portrayed Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for independence, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and closing with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi in the Birla House garden at the prayer meeting. The author narrates the love story of Sriram and Bharti. Sriram is a young man of twenty who lost his parents at an early age. His mother died delivering him, his father was killed in



Mesopotamia. He grew up under the care of his grandmother. She deposited more than thirty-eight thousand rupees for her pampered grandson saved out of the pension of his father. When Sriram becomes twenty years old, his grandmother allows him to handle his account in the local bank. Sriram's beloved Bharti is the daughter of a patriot who died at the hands of a policeman. Bharti was adopted by the local Sevak Sangh. She was educated according to Gandian principles.

“That was during the first non-co-operation days in 1920; her father led the first batch of Satyagrahis who were going to take down the Union Jack from the Secretariat at Madras. He was beaten with a police lathi and a blow fell on his chest and he dropped dead

- - - ”17

Sriram meets Bharti when she approaches him for a contribution to the fund for the reception of Mahatma Gandhi in Malgudi. Because of this enchanting and unpredictable girl Bharti, Sriram joins Gandhiji's group of followers of which she is a member. He became acquainted with the Gandhiji doctrines. From Mahatma Gandhi's tour of poverty-stricken villages he comes to know the miserable condition of peasants hardships and their trials and tribulations due to the Second World War. In the later chapters Sriram becomes an agent, a radio operator, a protester, whose range

of activity was to the mountain villages where it was his business to post notices decrying the war effort, distributing nationalist literature, and demanding that the British clear out. The novel is also remarkable for the rich galaxy of its minor characters. These characters add life, colour and variety in the novel. Sriram's granny is a woman of extreme devotion, touchiness, orthodoxy and individuality. Other minor characters like the peace-loving manager of the Fund Office and the comic revolutionary photographer Jagadish, who has an ambition to be the chief architect of independent India, the chief operator in ejecting the British, who has collected a number of photo albums to prove it.

The Guide won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960 and was converted into film, which was happily recognized as great box-office material by cinema studios. Dr. C.Paul Verghese states:

“Raju is more complex than any other character of Narayan's novels. In him we find the craftiness, dishonesty and credulity of Margayya and the fleshy bombast of ‘Mr. Sampath’, the adventurousness of Mali in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’, the romantic excess of Sriram in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ and the mystical learning of Chandran in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ and Srinivas in ‘Mr. Sampath’.”<sup>18</sup>

Narayan introduces a Triangle of love and lust in this novel – Raju-Rosie – and Marco, and depicted a three – dimensional character in Raju for the first time. Raju, the central character of this novel also leaves his duty, as a shopkeeper of books, becomes a guide, impresario of dance, a saint, and dies as martyr. The story of Raju the guide is divided into two parts: before and after his release from jail, when he starts a new life altogether. Narayan exploited every opportunity to provide the readers with some information about the earlier phase of Raju's life. While getting shaven Raju unwittingly blurts out the secret of his arrest and conviction and, finding himself alone in the temple before Velan came to see him, he contrasts mentally the present with days spent with Rosie. Success in persuading the girl to marry a man of Velan's choice, makes Raju feel that "he was attaining the stature of sainthood." The days of Raju's early youth helping his father at the shop or running truant from school to play with his mates. Side by side is depicted the plight of the villagers to merge imperceptibly into the happenings of the crucial day on which Raju begins his fast. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the fast, Raju falls down just as there are signs of rain on the distant horizon. Thus, the novel ends on a note of ambiguity. Dr. S.C. Harrex considers 'The Guide' as a guide to Narayan's art as a novelist. This novel shot Narayan's into great prominence to the extent that he becomes a by-word to the world of novel readers and the general public.

In the Man Eater of Malgudi, Vasu the taxidermist was a large man about six feet tall. His bull neck and hammer fist shows his actual strength. A tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a crop of unkempt hair distinguished him from average homo rapines. He was dashing, callous and assertive and lacked in social morality. Vasu's character is interesting, even if cruel, because it is delineated by another equally delightful character, Natraj, the printer of Malgudi. Evil always carries the seed of its destruction, goes the adage and Vasu proved it true. Disturbed by mosquitoes he slapped his forehead to kill the mosquitoes but ironically enough. Killed himself.

The Vendor of Sweets is R.K. Narayan's latest novel which came out in 1967. It is the story of sweet-vendor Jagan, a fifty five years old man. He is a philosophical and religious-minded persons and has been considerably influenced by the Gita. He follows Gandhi's principles to which he always adhered and for which he was sent to jail as a freedom Fighter. He tries to live up to the Gandhian way of life. He spins the Charkha and wears khadi, as Gandhiji had advised. However, he is more careful about money and keeps two account books to avoid paying income- tax. One consists of entries in a small private notebook, the other of detailed entries in a ledger, which can not be checked by anyone. He is attentive of customs and traditions, careful about rituals and uses sandals made from the hide of a

cow, which has died of sickness and old age. Jagan is also a comic and distressed person, comic in his blameless mixture of commercial sharpness, self-admiration, fiscal duplicity and distressed in his relationship with his barbarous son Mali. He is upset to know that Mali is discontinuing his education Mali announces that he is abandoning studies to go to America to learn the art of story writing for novel competition and win a prize of twenty five thousand Rs. And become a successful writer. Jagan does not feel happy at this decision and his feelings are thrown into still greater confusion. However, he soon detects that Mali is not writing any novel; he is only wasting his time. He is greatly shocked and hurt when he discovers that his son had stolen the ten thousand rupees for obtaining passport and reservation of seat for America. Jagan proudly tells the villagers that his son is in America. He is further shocked to learn that his son has formed the habit of taking beef, and advice him that they should follow his example in India. He receives another shock when Mali returns with his girl friend. After returning from America Mali plans to set up a factory for manufacturing story-writing machines with American collaboration and as his share he needs two and half lakh rupees for investment. He forces his father to provide financial support for he is sure that Jagan has earned much of money by selling sweets at high rates, and avoiding payment of income tax. The theory that stories

can be manufactured by a machine is a fine piece of satire on the modern craze for mechanization.

“Now Mali stood beside the cabinet in the attitude of a lecturer, he patted it fondly and said, “With this machine anyone can write a story. Come nearer, and you will see it working.”<sup>19</sup>

Mali plays the role in his life as the British played in India. He steals Jagan's money. In the beginning chapters Jagan was quite happy in his business at Malgudi, but in the end he becomes aware of religious parasitism, this makes a radical change in him. He enters a new life and his reaction is an example of what Gandhi wanted from Indians.

“ One enters a new life at the appointed time and its foolish to resist. He was no longer the father of Mali, the maker of sweets and gatherer of money each day: he was gradually becoming something else, perhaps a supporter of the bearded sculptor or was he really his ward ?”<sup>20</sup>

It is of course, a decision in accordance with traditional Indian philosophy requiring, as Jagan puts it, that at some stage in one's life one must uproot oneself from one's accustomed surroundings and retire so that the next generation can continue the business of life in peace. Narayan's

heroes revolutionize their inner selves to become better Indian and in this way the author, R.K. Narayan exhibits how Gandhi's message appealed to the spiritual in man and it remains effectual today, tomorrow and always. He represents Jagan's character 'with precise, effective care, the style and method, the ritual and satisfaction' of protagonist's work. Jagan's abondaing of the material world is a symbol of Indian tradition but he enters into the renunciation by his personal problems and intolerable situations. It highlights the ironies of the life of those leaders of free India who swear by the name of Mahatma Gandhi, but actually live a degraded life. Both father and son were rigid in their approach and did not see each other's point of view. The novel ending with Jagan leaving for the retreat and Mali landing in jail. The attitude are contrasted through symbols like Charkha and typewriter, renunciation and the business etc. under the veneer of idealism, Jagan was all too earthly-money-minded, selfish and short-sighted, and with his seeming efficiency and dynamism. Mali was actually tactless, superficial and conceited. The ironies of the old and new values are beautifully, explained R.K. Narayan has presented through Jagan's character a confluence of various strands of indigenous cultural tradition and realities of daily life.

The Painter of Signs again introduces the enchanting town, Malgudi, nay now city. Raman is depicted as a painter of signs who develops his

relation with Daisy, the arch-priestess of family Planning. Raman is modest with everyone. Raman and Daisy reminds us of another romantic pair of Sriram and Bharti in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, though in different circumstances. The unhappy ending is reminiscent of Narayan's other novels – *The Dark Room*, *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets* and *The Guide*. His love for tragic endings in novels was nurtured by his reading of western classics as he points out in his memoir, *My Days*.

“I loved tragic ending in novels. I looked for books that would leave me crushed at the end.”<sup>21</sup>

A *Tiger for Malgudi* brings out the novelist at the altitude of his genius as a creative artist. The novel is based on the fable of ‘The Tiger and the Hermit’ about which Narayan came to read in the newspaper. Having already the background of the Raja, the ferocious tiger that develops like a human being and becomes an awakened soul. He greets the reader on the very first page and subsequently tells him the whole story of his development to a living soul within his forbidden exterior.

“ - - - I possess a soul - - can think, analyse, judge, remember and do everything you do, perhaps with great subtly and sense. I lack only the faculty of speech.”<sup>22</sup>



There is tiger – Hermit who not only saves Raja from the outrageous crowd of Malgudi, bent upon killing it, but also transforms his inner being. It appears that R.K. Narayan, who has depicted objective as well as dramatic characters in his fiction, empathizes himself with Raja.

Woman-man relationship projected in Talkative Man through the medium of Dr. Rann remains unprecedented as far as Narayan's other novels are concerned. Dr. Rann is an unrepentant lecher, cheat and ravisher of woman's honour irrespective of the suitability or unsuitability of her age. Women are no more than a plaything for him purely meant for the gratification of his heartless, inhuman voluptuousness and carnal desires. Coursing through Dr. Rann's callous, endless, insatiable lechery, one feels like raising a query aloud, 'As flies to wanton boys, are women to Dr. Rann?' Conception of woman as the only means of satisfaction of man's sensuality is the product of a dehumanized, perverse mind. Dr. Rann's obsessive, untamed lechery is a threatening, poisonous and annihilating factor for human civilization as the grass-like weed – the subject of his research study – is projected by him as a future menace to the very existence of all forms of life.

The World of Nagaraj was first published in 1990. Nagaraj's life is totally peaceful with his wife Sita in his family's spacious house. Sita is much in common with Ambika of The Vendor of Sweets. Both arrive on the

scene as timid, shy girls and evolve into confident courageous women. The other characters of the novel are Nagaraj's mother, brother Gopu and his wife Charu, his nephew Tim and Tim's wife Saroja.

Narayan has first given a fairly clear picture of the orthodox traditional milieu of Malgudi and the shown how it changes with passing time. He has created a wonderful region through his novels and short stories named as Malgudi. There is hardly any doubt that he would have drawn inspiration for creating this hypothetical region from great masters of English and American fiction – Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennet and William Faulkner who enriched their fictional world with Wessex, Pottery Town and Yokna Patawapha. Like Hardy's well-known Wessex Narayan's Malgudi is quite familiar to every reader of his fiction. Professor K.R. Srinivas Iyengar has admirably a high opinion of Narayan's Malgudi. He states:

“- - - Malgudi is Narayan's casterbridge, but the inhabitants of Malgudi – although they have their recognizable trappings, are essentially human, and hence have their kinship with all humanity. In this sense, Malgudi is everywhere.”<sup>23</sup>

Through his innumerable works centered around Malgudi and through Shankar Nag's delightful television adaptation of Malgudi Days Narayan managed to lend a near mythical quality to Mysore, for which this city has to

be forever grateful. For some, Malgudi is Mysore, but there are some who believes that it is a town between Banglore and Madras, near Tambaram. Although, it can be assumed that Narayan drew Malgudi from his early childhood experiences, it would be futile to argue against the role Mysore played in sculpting his make believe town. Till ill-health prompted him to shift, Narayan lived long years here, walked its streets and savoured its smells and sights.

This town of Malgudi was first introduced in 'Swami and Friends' (1935) and since then it has been appearing in every novel and short stories of Narayan. In the earlier novels this region is shown with its immortal landmarks – the river Sarayu, hills and forests, groves and culverts – and the world of students and teachers, quite whimsical in nature. The world of boys and children, with their childish pranks and distracting illusions and hysterics, castes and sects, religious outlook, their inevitable relationship with their friends and the family is explored in 'Swami and Friends'. And in 'The Bachelor of Arts' Chandran's student life, love affair with Malathi and marriage is presented by Narayan. The intensity of true love and life after death are treated with a deeply –m felt experience in 'The English Teacher'. 'The Dark Room' presents Malgudi as a semi-westernized world. It is here that the western way of life begins to make deep inroads in the lives of Malgudians. To get in love with another married woman is not considered

sinful now. Malgudi has advanced in status and now it is no longer the world of school and college boys. But one thing is there – there is hardly any disturbance caused by domestic affairs of people is the arrival of a new wave of realism. The result is that some ultra-modern people begin to behave abnormally. In ‘The Dark Room’ Malgudi flourishes in business on account of a branch of Englandia insurance Company. Its manger is Ramani who owns a Chevrolet car and employs a lady probationer with a view to securing business from women. There is Englandia Banking Corporation introduced in ‘Mr. Sampath’ with a manager named Edward Shilling. The fund office is introduced in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ and Sriram’s grandmother is shown receiving payments there. The Central Cooperative Mortgage Bank is the center of Margayya’s financial activities in ‘The Financial Expert’. The town had a legend of Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, and Mahatma Gandhi who came here and brought about changes in the dull, old and conservative atmosphere of Malgudi. However, people of this region are hardly susceptible to radical changes because the eternal culture of the town is so deep-rooted in their hearts that they are not allowed to peep into the altogether new wave of western realism. If anyhow the younger generation comes under the influence of the western culture, their happiness is preserved, they are astonishingly misled. So long as their root is preserved they are mentally healthy and show little inclination to imitate the western values. The moment

they are uprooted, their normalcy is at stake and they suffer from mental aberrations. Balu, the son of the financial expert is controlled in his actions so long as he is under the guidance of his father. The moment he is with Dr. Pal, he easily hastens to prostitution and revolts against his father, tumbling down the entire edifice of his great business concern. But the unique spirit of Malgudi helps in awakening the minds of almost all protagonists to get rid of their ulterior motives and shed selfishness forever. Their means help the ends. They learn at last that unselfishness is more paying provided they have the patience to practice it. Forgetfulness of self-sounds to be the one great lesson to be learnt in life. The people of this region come to understand in course of their development that is not only preposterous but also foolish to think that selfishness can make them happy. But for this they have to undergo a lot of struggle to arrive at the decisive conclusion that true happiness consists in the absolute killing of selfishness. There is none to make them except themselves.

In a small town we find landmarks such as Nellappa Grove , the Lawley Extension, Kabir Road, the Albert Mission School, the spreading tamarind tree, the river Saru and the Mempa hills all these made realistic by Narayan's craftsmanship of description. He develops Malgudi as the symbol of the whole India. Because these places are closely connected with the characters in the way they use them in accordance with their inclination and

propensity. We tend to know and recognize the banks of the river Sarayu, Nallappa's grove, Mempi Hills, and within the town the Palace Talkies, Lawley Extension, Market Road, the railway station, the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley. Board less Coffee House, The Truth Printing Press, Albert Mission School and the College of its name, Board High School, Central Jail, Malgudi Grand Circus and the well-known zoo, Engladia Insurance Company, Regal Haircutting saloon, the Central Cooperative Mortgage Bank, Anand Bhavan, Modern lodge, Malgudi Photo Bureau, the Suburban stories, Malgudi Cricket Club all are closely related to the protagonists of Narayan's Novels and short stories. A host of streets and by lanes are connected with the Market Road which is the lifeline of Malgudi. Mrs. Holstrom Lakshmi points out:

“ The main streets and residential places are given their character and distinctiveness through the people who live there and who are the main character in the novels. Lawley Extension is described in the early novels as the place where the rich, respectable, mainly Brahmin families live ---- the New Extension where Rosie and Raju live, after Rosie becomes famous, the enormous showy houses such as Neel Bagh, the house of the Chairman of the Municipality (in Waiting for

the Mahatama) 'whose massive gates were of the wrought iron patterned after the gate of Buckingham Palace'. Kabir Street one of the oldest parts of the town."<sup>24</sup>

Malgudi is explored in every detail in order to give a clear-cut view of the town. And therefore, every new novel and short story unfolds the possibilities of this region in the manner of providing a glimpse of changing times and conditions. For instance, names of streets, parks and extensions are changed and nationalized in the honour of the birth of independence in the short story Lawley Road.

In The Guide the town grows in importance because it attracts the attentions of tourists in order to know it historically and scenically and from the point of view of modern developments. In, Waiting for the Mahatma the town is visited by Mahatma Gandhi in order to preach the message of castelessness and untouchability, leaving the nationalist agitation aside. The repeated reference to Malgudi becomes worn out. In The Painter of Signs Malgudi is compared with Network and in Mr. Sampath with Switzerland.

Characters are sentimentally attached to Saryu. In The Bachelor of Arts Chandran finds Malathi on its Sandbank and falls in love at first sight. Sriram in Waiting for the Mahatma also finds solace with her sweetheart Bharati here. In The Dark Room, Savitri when driven out of home tries to

end her life by jumping into the river. The people of Malgudi trusts in the doctrine of karma, rebirth and rich mythical past.

In his latest novel, *Second Opinion*, Sarayu finds a disputable discussion between Sambu and his mother. The mother recalls the days gone by when she used to live near Sarayu in Kabir Street. It

“----- flowed down rather tamely at some distances from our house ---- the river used to be much nearer to us in those days ---- it is somehow moved away so far out. When well were dug people became lazy and neglected the river; and no wonder she has drawn herself away; through in those days you could touch the water if you stretched your arm through the backdoor.”<sup>25</sup>

Mempi Hill and forest occur and recur in the majority of Narayan's novels. In 'Mr. Sampath' Sampath finds a romantic resort at Mempi when the whole scheme of the shooting of film is altogether disturbed by Ravi. It is here that his so called cousin – beloved shanty parts with him forever. Narayan seems to make the best use of the local material in his latest novel *A Tiger for Malgudi*. Despite bamboo jungles, a coconut trees and teas estate, Mempi is rich enough for its wild life. Rabbits, foxes, squirrels, monkeys, apes, jackals, porcupines with their dangerous quills, hyenas, kites,



vultures, eagles, crows, leopards – all live here like different families as human beings live in the populated areas. There are beautiful streams and valleys, rivulets and culverts, wild fruits and strawberries in Mempi jungles where endless game of wild creatures is played on. Professor K.R. Srinivas Iyengar is right in his incisive interpretation that :

“ - - - Underneath the seeming changes and the human drama there is something – the ‘Soul’ of the place - - that defies, or embraces, all changes and is triumphantly and unalterably itself. All things pass and change : Men and women try to live, and even as they are living they are called upon to die: Names change, fashions change, but the old landmarks – the Sarayu, the hills, the jungles, the grove – remain. “The one remains, the many change and pass.”<sup>26</sup>

The people of Malgudi have faith in the doctrine of karma, rebirth and their rich mythical past. The outstanding characters are modern in the sense that they do not lay any claim to ‘heroism, nor do they control events on the contrary they are controlled by events and circumstances.

Narayan’s humour, as he defines in his essay ‘On Humour’ in ‘Next Sunday’, “lightens the burden of existence.” But he warns his readers that it still remains the individual business, and therefore, it should not be analysed

and studied separately. It does not mean that he is against analysis and study but because humour is not a device to be applied for including laughter; it is the consummation of the human instinct for laughter. Narayan derives inspiration for his humour from the 'absurdities and contradictions seen in public life.' The self-important men like 'Vasu' also provide ingredient for his humour because of their pomposities. The elaborate pageantry at the arrival and departure of the V.I.P. and the ridiculous fuss of the bureaucrats then also inspire his imagination to create a funny scene with the pure intention to create laughter and side by side lay his finger on trivialities of the situation. Thus, we get in his fiction humour of character or humour arising from the odd and grotesque in character or person, humour of situation or farcical humour, humour arising from jokes, jests, repartees, reports and the cleaver use of the language from various points of view. Sometimes his humour admirably mingles with pathos and then the reader is led to smile through his tears. Even at the moments of the highest tragedy Narayan can be comic. Satiric humour is also there in his novels and short stories but it is primarily used to satirize money-lenders, greedy businessmen, extorting house owners, black marketers and profiteers, producers of obscene films, credulous simpletons, fake sanyasis, half-hearted dreamers, speculators and twisters. But in this satiric humour he is so mild and gentle that it is very often difficult to discover and decide whether he

is satiric or he is intending to expose and ridicule for the amusement of his readers. Sine he accepts life as it is however irrational and absurd it may be, his humour is ironical, genial and kindly. He is hardly carried away by the zeal of the reformer. It is his nature to be a humorist of the ridiculous and the sublime, but he is not a satirist. Professor C.D. Narasimhah rightly remarks and effectively pints out that :

“Narayan’s sense of the comic is sustained not by the Dickensian kind of exaggeration but rather, if a comparison has to be made to enlist understanding and evoke response, the irony of understatement practiced by a Jane Austen.”<sup>27</sup>

The difference between Jane Austen and R.K. Narayan is that the former relies essentially on artistic amusement while the later on artistic detachment. The artistic detachment is suitable to Narayan’s shy temperament. His chief aim lies at showing the discrepancy between actually and aspiration. The common is presented in somewhat uncommon way so that the inconsistency in the protagonist’s behaviour and action could be recognized. Narayan’s humour is tolerant, urban and genial. As a comic writer he is closer in spirit to Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens than to Swift, Voltaire and Thackeray. Graham Greene compared Narayan to any English author. Professor V.V. Kantak points out:

“The resemblance indeed is striking – the same objectivity, the same freedom from comment, the same ‘intricate alliance’ of humour with tragedy – the comic flowing into delicate pathos, as delicate as the faint discoloration of ivory with age, as Greene puts it – and the same seeming indirection of event with which the characters, on the last page, appear to vanish into life. Narayan’s light vivid style with its sense of time passing, of the unrealized beauty of human relationships so often recalls Chekhov’s.”<sup>28</sup>

But it will be incorrect to be presumptuous about any attempt, conscious or unconscious, at imitation by Narayan. The social milieus of Chekhov and Narayan are different, and so are their tenets of ethos. Chekhov had less freedom from social commitment or comment than Narayan. Narayan’s comic vision is marked by a greater degree of optimism and affirmation. Narayan’s dispassionate comic detachment is the indication of a personal endeavour to attain a balance in his life, to surmount and rationalize the emptiness of the ‘profound and unmitigated loneliness created by his wife’s sudden demise. It was so sudden and traumatic that Narayan, as Ved Mehta records in his interview, ‘considered following her into the funeral pyre.’ The personal realization, as already mentioned in the same

chapter of this thesis. Narayan portrays scenes and situations to amuse his readers, but deeper meaning lies within, and that is, he intends to show how in India relative absence of privacy puzzles the individual person. He has no power to desist the human tendency from regarding private affairs as a matter of public interest and concern. In, The Financial Expert Margayya's son, Balu has thrown the red account-book to oblivion down a deep gutter. In causes a great deal of concern to Margayya who is a money -lender. Under the pressure of annoyance he begins to punish his son on the road. The intervening crowd quickly gathers at once and perversely regards Balu as hero of the scene. A group of individuals goes to the extent of stripping Margayya off his parental authority. The scene serves as a splendid example of the way the novelist astutely conveys the quick psychological succession of events. Some dragged away the child crying:

“ Save the child from thus ruffian . . . a woman with a basket came forward to ask, “Are you a heartless demon? . . . She flung down the basket and picked up the child on her arm. Balu copiously sobbed on her shoulder. Another woman tried to take him from her, commenting “only those who bear the child for ten months in the womb know how precious it is. Men are like this. Someone objected to this statement. .

resorted with great warmth : Boys must be chastised ;otherwise do you want them to grow up into devils ?' Margayya looked at him gratefully. Here at least was a friend in this absolutely hostile world. He swept his arms to address all the woman and the gathering. It's all very well for you to talk . . But he has thrown in there an important account book. What am I to do without it ?"<sup>29</sup>

Society is pressing upon Margayya from all sides. Everyone seems to talk to him arrogantly except the man who supports his action and speaks rationally. But he too is gone. He is well-acquainted with the tendency of his son who will not prefer his sympathizers to go until they take him to the shop and bring him peppermints. Margayya is afraid of society because no one will let him do what he likes. The folk even in the next house seem to have no better business than to hang about to see what is happening to Margayya. At home even his wife is to behave rudely. She expresses her annoyance in a threatening way. He loses temper again. The whole situation for Margayya is full of absurdities and contradictions.

Zarathushtra declares that life "is an eternal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil."<sup>30</sup> In literature the forces of evil are discomfited by the forces of truth, love and beauty, symbolizing good. At times the forces of

evil seem to be gruesome and too formidable to have gone their own way, vanquishing the good. But it is only the appearance, the reality is beyond it, on the other side of the coin. In 'Othello', Desdemona sustains a fatal death, Cassia suffers a loss of reputation and physical injuries, even Maria suffers a lot and is killed eventually, but what Iago, the arch-villain, suffers is certainly more than what all suffer on the whole. His whole life at last is a mockery, a perpetual detest, and overbearing to live on. In reality, Iago is in the living hell of this world. It is, therefore, evident that Good is victorious at last, and it may appear to be defeated for a while in the beginning or the middle. Narayan's protagonists also try to lead a life free from 'distracting illusions and hysterics', but they are bewildered by unwholesome irrationalities of life, at times life is really treacherous, unbearable, detestable and what not. But, on the whole, it is a strange blend of sorrow and happiness. It is not wholly a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, nor is it a bug-bear to trouble endlessly. On the whole it is promising and acceptable. It is acceptable because the dynamics of man's experience induce a pietistic feeling in him for life's continuity. For instance, Krishnan's wife, Sushila dies in the prime of her youth, abandoning her husband and the only child in 'The English Teacher', but her death proves a boon in disguise as the husband is able to win her soul and

realize her perpetual presence at home. Krishnan is no longer agonized now. On the contrary, he has a strange kind of beatitude, as he expresses himself:

“The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy – a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death.”<sup>31</sup>

There is no doubt that such experiences are rare in human life, but in Narayan sword of fiction, and more truly in the world of his imagination, they have a vital place. They depend upon the man's endeavour, his personal character, sincerity of purpose, purity of thought and action, patience of mind and the force of love. Narayan points out time and again through his protagonists that the life can be lived without distracting illusions and hysterics unless one demands nothing more than the bare facts of life. It shows passivity of mind, a strong hold on the workings of mind, which is a are characteristic, on the hand, on the other, it sounds meaningless in the present day world where the desire is supposed to be the fountainhead for all achievements in human life. Narayan's way of life is rooted in the Hindu culture of eternal India.

In, *The Financial Expert*, Margayya's ambitions have no bound, but he returns to his original self only after having experienced shocks and surprises of misfortune. It is the power of love, which brings him to the



passive existence of life at last. He returns to the banyan tree with his knobby tin box. Professor K. Venkatachari points out:

“It is not resignation that connotes passivity but acceptance that characterizes the attitude which the Narayan hero comes to adopt in the face of experience. Although Narayan hero does not become a ‘Sthitaprajana’, one who on account of his ‘settled spiritual condition’ becomes inured to the shocks and surprises of life.”<sup>32</sup>

But Narayan hero has evidently a feeling for the continuity of life. He does not show inclination to reject it altogether. In the recent novel, ‘A Tiger For Malgudi’ this feeling of life’s continuity is expressed in the words of so cunning a creature as the jackal who advises the protagonist Raja to believe in sense of cohesion, because life is not at all to be meant for ending in scuffle:

“If you can not discover a reason to be enemies, why don’t you consider to be friends. How grand can you make it if you joined forces . . . if you combined you could make all the jungle shakes.”<sup>33</sup>

Narayan’s characters live in their ivory towers so long as they are not tested on the touchstone of life by chance and circumstances which they face

in course of their experiences. But Narayan seems to exhort them like Robert Browning not to reject their lives full of ifs and buts and overwhelming irrationalities. They are led to see the 'last of life for which the first was made'. Life is a journey through sorrow and happiness, and this journey can be made worthwhile only by the forces of Truth, Love and Beauty, already present in the human soul.

It is, therefore obvious that Narayan depends considerably on objective characterization and this is one of the reasons that his characters not only seems to be existing, but also are objective. It is through precision and concentration that he makes them attractive and entertaining. His characters live and grow within their resolved boundary and act and move freely in the atmosphere of Malgudi. It is very clear that Narayan chooses the living characters from real society to represent them in his novels. Among them the hero's personality chiefly dominates the whole course of incidents by force of his character, but not like epic heroes who have heroic qualities and are shown to have been gifted with unquestionable boldness and liveliness. The hero in Narayan's novel is a common man, having a marked potential for the uncommon. This potential for the uncommon brings him into clash with circumstances and he is overpowered eventually and becomes a tool in the hands of destiny as well as in the enormity of his own creation till he is forced by his inner self to return to a more mature state of

the ordinary. Therefore, the usual pattern into which his hero is woven is obvious in reversal of his novels. It is from average to extraordinary and going back to a more piquant state of average. This seems to be a reiterated movement basically as concern to interacting characters in the majority of Narayan's novels. But it does not mean that Narayan's art of characterization is stereotyped. It is surely dynamic because inspite of this usual pattern: average – extraordinary – and average with maturity, there is a collection of protagonists. This tendency is apparent right from his first novel, 'Swami and Friends'. Swami's ideal friend Rajam is a total contrast to Swami's inferiority complex composed of 'apprehension, weakness and nervousness.' This couple of inferior and superior occupies the canvas of the novelist and seems almost in every fiction of his thirteen novels, ten have been given protagonistic titles: The Bachelor of Arts, The English Teacher, Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, The Guide, The Vendor of Sweets, The Painter of Sings and A Tiger for Malgudi and the maiden novel, Swami and Friends. The protagonist could be the similar character under the influence of other character, but his unquenchable quest for a positive philosophy of life remains undisturbed till he achieves spiritual maturity. The road to cover the journey of life may be ill-matched, but the aim is the same. This happens to be the chief object of approximately every protagonist of his novels. It is distinguishable feature of R.K. Narayan's art

of characterization to present a foil to his hero so that his personality could develop into scale. This quality can be noted in ten of his novels very clearly. For example, Swami is a contrast to Rajam in 'Swami and Friends' as the former is governed by emotions and the latter by reason and commonsense. Chandran and Mohan in 'The Bachelor of Arts', Krishnan and the soul of his deceased wife in 'The English Teacher', Sampath and Srinivas in 'Mr. Sampath', Margayya and Dr. Pal in 'The Financial Expert', Raju and Marco and therefore Raju and Velan in 'The Guide', Natraj and Vasu in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi', Jagan and Cousin in 'The Vendor of Sweets', Raman and Daisy in 'The Painter of Sings', Nagaraj and his brother Gopu in 'The World of Nararaj', and Raja and Hermit in 'A Tiger For Malgudi' presents a contrast to one another. This contrast is symbolizes by feeling and reasons. Chandran, Krishnan, Srinivas, Margayya, Natraj, Jagan, Raman have their prototype in Swaminathan, the model on which Narayan created the personality of all these protagonists. The second line on which the protagonist are developed is the line of reason. Sampath, Dr. Pal, Raju and Vasu are made, more or less, of the same class. Therefore, there are two types of protagonists in Narayan's novels who become instrumental in bringing about the desired disclosure of life to the hero. In spite of his average personality and simple background Narayan's hero is a distinguished and popular man, not by quality of his greatness but because of

his influential presence in almost all the incidents which may differ from one novel to another but their scheme is unchanged. The hero, being ordinary and commonplace is subject to some dramatic events in the course of his life. These dramatic events are bound to produce a more mature experience beyond which can be no worse than that already experienced by the hero's mind. Morality and psychology are fused together to evaluate the workings of the hero's psyche. The main purpose of R.K. Narayan is to display the development of an individual from obscurity to fame. The thematic pattern in which the story of his protagonists seems to be working is the acceptance of life inspite of its trials and tribulations. The hero believes and supports life in totality but he is the amalgamation of virtue and vice as all mankind are.

## Notes

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# **Chapter – 2**

## **Portrayal of Women Characters**

R.K. Narayan, the grand old man of Indian-English literature, wrote his first novel *Swami and Friends*, about seven decades ago. He has been a prolific and a popular writer ever since. His early novels were written in the pre-independence era as *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), and *The English Teacher* (1945). His early novels may be considered as a group different from his novels published after independence. In comparison to later novels he depicts simple characters and incidents, less involved and less complicated. The presentation of women characters in Narayan's novels has been one of the consistent concern of Narayan. His novels from beginning to the latest published one, *The World of Nagaraj* written over a period of more than fifty years provide an in-exhaustible and variety of female characters. These female protagonists are distinctive by a number of shades and hues. The characteristic of Narayan's description of women is more appealing as great achievement of his creative sensibility. All the characters are depicted and arranged against the common background of Narayan's fictional town Malgudi. Through his fictional town Malgudi Narayan has presented the Indian culture and society. His sincerity, dedication and detached perception of people and their circumstances have nicely contributed to his artistic achievement of producing such an excellent female characters. In his art of

creative writing, his main emphasis lies on the depiction of a character whether male or female. He says,

“My focus is all on character. If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy for me.”<sup>1</sup>

Skill in characterization is the measure of a novelist's greatness, and in this respect R.K. Narayan is the greatest of the Indo-Anglian novelists. He achieves greatness in the field of characterization by recognizing his range and working within it. He presents middle class characters excellently. He himself belonged to a middle class family of South India. He was closely acquainted with its ways, habits and desires and, therefore, he rightly limits himself to this particular class. His canvas is a limited one, and it is never overcrowded. His preoccupation is with the middle class, a relatively small part of an agriculture civilization and the most conscious and anxious part of the population. Its members are neither too well-off nor in known financial worry nor too poor to be degraded by want and hunger. They may take their religion more easily than the passionately credulous poor, but even in those with a tendency towards modernity one is always aware, under the educated speech, of the profound murmur of older voices of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, the spouse of God Vishnu. Narayan's characters are primarily men whereas women occupies secondary place. He has created a beautiful spectrum through which women can be seen from several points of

view. He has acquired a definite place in the history of world fiction on account of his sustaining vitality and consistency of visions. The heroines of Narayan's novels are flimsy. He has himself revealed this fact in his interview with Onlooker: 'Why was it he had no heroines but heroes in his novels?' Narayan corrected Onlooker: 'I have no heroes, only non-heroes and of course no heroines'. It is because he finds women determined, patient and self controlled. Their life is controlled by set of rules and regulations and they are basically clearheaded, at least in the small town world of his novels and short stories. Men have an inclination to fumble and become not reliable as Narayan could observe through his insight in human beings and they are usually uncertain. He found women more stereotyped than men. However some heroines are very impressive and enchanting. He has depicted contrast characters. One who is traditional and deep rooted in Hindu culture appears in his early novels – Swami's mother and Grandmother (Granny) are tradition – abiding, self- complacent, habitually very obedient, cooperative, traditionalist and passive women. Chandran's mother in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Savitri and Janamma in 'The Dark Room', Srinivas's wife and Sampath's wife in 'Mr. Sampath', Margayya's wife in 'The Financial Expert', Raju's mother in 'The Guide', Nataraj's wife in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi', Jagan's wife in 'The Vendor of Sweets', Sriram's Granny in 'Waiting for the Mahatma', the ascetic's wife in 'A Tiger for Malgudi',

Raman's old aunt and the Bank Accountant's wife in 'The Painter of Signs', Nagaraj's wife Sita and his mother in 'The World of Nagaraj'. All these female characters are designed as the bodyguard of 'Custom and Reason' who judge what is morally right or wrong. In such a traditional – bound in which the character is placed, the middle class concept of women as second to man holds sway. Hence woman is condemned to the everlasting slavery of domestic boring task, suffering and breeding of children, dedication dutifulness towards her husband who delight in the unchallengeable command and rule over her as one does in case of one's household commodities. They are nothing more than a shadow of their male counterpart. The slightest contravention of the accepted social principle of honesty and decency creates a number of problems to them whereas man enjoys a relatively free life not restricted by anyone. Their conduct and behaviour are free from boundations. Women as wives, mothers, aunts and grannies largely portrayed the passive feminine. They are mostly not named, known by their family relationships.

The other class of Narayan's memorable women characters are Shanta Bai of 'The Dark Room', Shanti of 'Mr. Sampath', Bharti of 'Waiting for the Mahatma', Rosie of 'The Guide', Rangi of 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi', Grace of 'The Vendor of Sweets', Daisy of 'The Painter of Signs', Roja of the 'Talkative Man'. This class of the female characters is also present in

almost all the novels of Narayan including the latest one 'The World of Nagaraj (1990)' and 'The Grand Mother's Tale (1992)'. In contrast to traditional characters, the modern set of female characters of R.K. Narayan's novels are known by their relationship with men. Such relationship is subtle and varied. These women are further known by the characteristic of modern civilization which cling to them as dangerous endowments. They simultaneously electrify their environments by the enthusiasm and desires they show for life and independence. The hypnotism of modernity outweighs their insert desire to follow tradition. In the early novels the character of women are depicted just as they were in the pre-independence era. Alteration and disagreement of tradition and modernism is visible in the novels of the middle phase. In his later novels modernism has finally enslaved Malgudi and its people shaken the roots of tradition. The alteration of Narayan's women from Savitri of 'The Dark Room' to Daisy of 'The Painter of Signs' 'fortifies foregoing' statements.

The heroines of Narayan's novels are weak and fragile. He himself has accepted this fact in his interview with Onlooker. He finds women strong and forbearing. Their life is directed by rules and regulations and they are basically clearheaded. Narayan could detect through his insight in human beings that men have a tendency to fumble and they are usually uncertain. He found women more conventional than men. He developed minor

characters in the course of progress of the story as he had said in his interview with W.E. Walsely. There are a variety of minor characters who are supportive and adjusting in the development of the protagonists character and at period of time they appear as important and attractive as the main characters. Some of them are Ponni, Mari, Gangu and Janamma in 'The Dark Room', Susila, Kailas and Mohan in 'The Bachelor of Arts', Ravi and the house owner in 'Mr. Sampath', Rangi, Sastri, Sen, the Nehru – baiting journalists in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi', Dr. Krishnan in 'Second Opinion' and Captain's wife Rita in 'A Tiger For Malgudi' Grace in 'The Vendor of Sweets' Charu and Saroja in 'The World of Nagaraj.' These are all memorable characters of flesh and blood, of virtues and vices, as real as their counterparts in real life. Narayan uses both common and unique personalities who are based on culturally convincing traditional images but he, as Raji Narasimhan states:

“Provides the best illustration of the first type (perennials). Essentially, almost all his characters are re-creation of one basic character : a basic Narayan character what prevents this from polling in his ever-fresh enthusiasm for the revived character, a genuine and quiet, unaffected liking for him. But apart from these re-creations of a basic figure there are some who

appear as Staccato. They are left untouched and apparently, are considered plastic enough by the author to blend into the particular mood and situation.”<sup>2</sup>

She is partially right in her statement that apart from the recreations of a basic figure some staccato figures are left untouched. The point is clear that they also influence the basic character in many ways. And if they are not integrated in the plot as a logical integration, it is because they seem to appear almost on time where their presence is necessary. The grandmother and the adjournment lawyer are such figures in most of his novels. And one of the most important characters Malgudi that has perpetuated in all the novels and short stories so far. Professor K.R.S. Iyengar correctly suggests that it would be

“- - - interesting to advance the theory that Malgudi is the real hero of the - - - novels and the many short stories, that underneath the seeming change and the human drama there is something – the ‘soul’ of the place? – that defies or embraces, all change and is triumphantly and unalterably itself.”<sup>3</sup>

Apart from these chief characters, there are equally a variety of minor characters in Narayan’s novels. It is obvious that Narayan has depicted a



large variety of excellent characters who emerges from the soil of south India and in course of their knowledge and experience develop a sense of belonging to the whole humanity. They are amalgamation of virtue and vices as all human beings are.

R.K. Narayan's characters are primarily men through as a detached artist he has been giving due importance to women as well as custodian of natural order and as a judge of what is right and what is wrong. In 'The Dark Room' Savitri is in lead role but 'Grand Mother's Tale' can be safely said to be the story the female character Bala only. In a glaring contrast to Narayan's statement in an early novel 'The Dark Room', where Savitri states,

"What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's."<sup>4</sup>

and also in contradiction to Manu's law that,

"A woman is to be guarded by her father as a child, by her husband in her youth and maturity and by her sons when she is widow - at no times she should be free."<sup>5</sup>

Narayan focuses some viewpoints in My Days:

"I was somehow obsessed with philosophy of Woman as opposed a Man, her constant oppressor. This must

have been as early testament of the "Women's Lib" movement. Man assigned her secondary place and kept her here with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notions of her independence, her individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel, *The Dark Room* dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background."<sup>6</sup>

Narayan is an objective artist, one who has a true sense of detachment and non-commitment. In his role as a novelist vis-à-vis his Malgudi he is neither a champion of tradition nor of modernity. His fictional representation of the changing position of woman is in tune with the realistic picture of life. As pointed out by Narayan himself, 'he does not have a philosophy regarding men-woman relationship' but he is not a feminist. The portrayal of women is a piece of life fictionally set down by Narayan. His fictional presentation of the changing position of women in Malgudi is corroborated by the accounts given by sociologists who have written about Indian women. In his characterization Narayan may not be as great as Shakespeare and Charles Dickens are, but he is the adept delineator of the convincing characters which are part fiction and part fact.

In *The Bachelor of Arts* there are three female characters Chandran's mother, Malathi and Sushila. Both of the two young female characters have been depicted through Chandran's eyes. Chandran's mother also comes in the category of traditional woman who sounds interesting from the point of view of showing unwarranted rigidity and conservativeness on the main tenancies of time-honoured customs of marriage. Malathi is informed only through passing references and discussions. Owing to horoscope disagreement Chandran's marriage with Malathi is not possible. Sushila appears in the closing chapter of the novel. Chandran agrees to marry under hard persuasion of his parents and his friend Mohan and finally, they are married. Chandran's matrimonial alliance with Sushila marks his redemption from the last vestiges of memories of unreal world of Malathi's love affair.

In *The Dark Room* Savitri emerges as a traditional Indian woman, docile, submissive and sacrificing by nature. She is ill-treated by her husband but she is not aware of any possibility of protest. When she does gather up the courage to protest, she is unsuccessful. The two dark room – one in the home and one in the temple – are used symbolically and reflect directly the limits of free choice and individuality. The character of Shanta Bai in *The Dark Room* is a symbol of modern women. In the novel she comes round as a living creature with her artful movements of lips, tossing of her head in a flirtiest manner and her coquettish behaviour. Her only

motive is her job. Gangu and Janamma are minor characters. Both of them are Savitiri's friends but differ in term of their personality, attitude and ambitions. Janamma is a wife of an advocate. She is little educated, middle-aged lady who nurtures no ambition. Unlike Savitir she is also traditional wife. She advises to Savitri, never disobey or contradict with your husband in any condition, 'What he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so'. On the contrary, Gangu is educated, fair looking, ambitious and relatively younger than Janamma. She is a wife of teacher. She takes part in social activities. She is ambitious of Malgudi as a delegate to the women conference or making a career in film line. She has a moral sense. She advises her friend Savitri to take care and control Ramani's undesirable movements. She is a socially acceptable modern woman with due respect or faithful to her husband. Gangu and Pooni are representative of modern woman. Pooni whose intimate response to Savitri, her care and affection for her, her dealing with Ranganna, her command over her husband make her sharp, practical woman with a compassionate heart and an innocent disposition.

In Mr. Sampath, Srinivas's wife and Sampath's wife Kamala, comes under the traditional, orthodox women of Narayan's novels. Tradition is ingrained in these two to such a measures that Srinivas's wife can not move out of the house unescorted, not even to buy vegetables for daily consumption. Similarly Sampath's wife is so shy and submissive that in

presence of an outsider, she talks in gestures to her husband, half-hidden a curtain. Shanti, in contrast to both of them, is a bold, and extrovert lady, a film actress are thus miles away from that of the other two. Ravi's mother is lives a poor, miserable life and plays limited role in the novel.

The Financial Expert portrays traditional, orthodox, Meenakshi, Maragayya's wife who freely argues and nags her poor husband, but changes into a devoted, submissive, taciturn creature when Margayya becomes prosperous. So much is she cowed down by her wealthy husband that soon she becomes a non-entry. She loves her child very much and seeing him alive again results is an awakening in her and development of new personality.

In Waiting for the Mahatma, Narayan has proved that he could go beyond the follies and little ironies of the Malgudians. Sriram joined the freedom movement on account of his love for Bharti and for her he could do anything. Bharti is an independent, bold, assertive girl, who can argue efficiently with men and win the conversation in her favour. She is beautiful, smart-looking and intelligent too. She has had a rigorous training in life, which has helped her to achieve her goals. Nevertheless, she is soft-hearted and has feelings for the distressed women of her country. The young lady imports her duties as mother to about thirty odd children excellently. She is a true Gandian and a devoted freedom fighter, ready to sacrifice her own love

for the love of the country. In contrast to her is granny, who is ignorant, uneducated and of the traditional orthodox set. Her whole life has centered around her home and children and then her grandson, whom she loves a lot.

P.S. Sundaram says,

“Waiting for the Mahatmas” is not a political novel.

He (Narayan) is not concerned with projecting a Gandhi image, but telling the story of a very average young man and what happens to the two (Sriram and Bharti) of them.”<sup>7</sup>

In, *The Guide*, Rosie figures as the symbol of transition from traditional ethos of Indian women to modernity. In the climb her moral values may have degenerated; nevertheless, she succeeds in achieving her individuality and economic independence. A sharp contrast is provided by Raju's mother who is a traditional, old lady and who is at a total loss to understand Rosie, the symbol of modern woman. The third minor woman character in the novel is Velan's sister. She is fourteen years old girl. She does not want to marry with the boy of Velan's choice to avoid this situation, she runs away from her house. Velan loves her very much. He asks for Raju's advice on this matter. She is discovered and brings to meet Raju. By chance she considers marrying and repent of her past conduct. This

unexpected sudden change in the girl attitude confirms to the superstitions and native mind of Velan that Raju is a saint.

In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, Rangi, Natraj's wife, Rangi's mother Padma, adjournment lawyer's wife, his son-in-law's mother and a few girls and women (while they are coming back from Vasu's attic early in the morning) are portrayed in the novel. All these characters are not fully developed, they are delineated in the novel for certain specific viewpoint. There is no significance female character except for perhaps Rangi, the temple dancer. She is totally independent. She needs no man to lean on. Nor does she entangle herself emotionally with any man. Through a professional prostitute she has a good sense of values. She considers, her moral duty as a temple dancer to save the sacred life of the temple elephant, Kumar, irrespective of the all the danger involved in this mission. She is frank, bold, shrewd and straight -forward by her nature. Her candour and boldness becomes clear vis-à-vis Natraj's stress and anxiety. He conceals the truth from her and to keep a false, bold posture before her, he assures her not to worry, as he will tackle Vasu successfully in his own way. She can not bear to see an animal killed just for the pleasure of any man. She takes risk and saves, the life of the temple elephant and of hundreds of men, women and children in the procession is exemplary and heightens her stature as a human being. She is faithful to the Malgudian people.

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, the first and the only foreign heroine of the novelist, Grace is portrayed. She had left everything including her country in the pursuit of her love for Mali. But he rejects her callously when he feels, he does not need her. Jagan calls her a good girl for the concern and the solicitude she felt for Jagan in her attempt to be a good Hindu wife. In contrast to Grace, Ambika is a prototype of Savitri-type of women, and yet she evolves as an assertive, independent being by protesting against the unjust enunciations of her mother-in-law. Jagan can accept her to be died but never allowed her to touch any medicine because it went against his theories of nature cure. In the same way Mali also offended him by neglecting in personal and business matters. She also shows a remarkable individuality by not being influenced by her husband's philosophies.

In *The Painter of Signs* we have Daisy. In her, Narayan shows the ultimate potential of an ordinary Indian girl. The old ideals of family obedience and reverence to the elders in the family are gradually dropped for the sake of keeping one's own individuality intact. The institution of marriage is gradually losing its tradition from its traditional form. In Daisy's view if a man and a woman are willing to live together, they are as good as married. Thus, the transition from the traditional to the modern is complete. Daisy is a social worker obsessed with her work. Her only aim in life is to reduce the population of the country. She can trample on her own dreams



and happiness for the sake of her work. Narayan, again offers another traditional character in order to contrast, highlight Daisy's independent, assertive nature. That traditional character in Raman's aunt, who is pious, religious, orthodox lady, who looks after her nephew in a loving manner. She can not take in Daisy's modernism and thus retreats to Banaras. The Bank Accountant's wife is also traditional like Raman's aunt. She objects that he is marrying a lady who is not of their caste. She says,

"You are a good boy," she said and added, "You will go to heaven for this, I am sure. You are a gem, don't I know, but evil company warps – that is why it is important that one should marry at the proper time and age. Nothing can then go wrong."<sup>8</sup>

She curtly remarks that his aunt is responsible for all this, she should not have let him roam about freely rather she should have married some girl much earlier.

In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, Captain's wife Rita, Lyla, Jaggu's wife and hermit's wife are portrayed. There is no female character who is directly relevant in the plot but Rita, the Circus Captain's wife, stands out because of her individuality, her assertiveness, her liveliness and finally her clever answers to her husband's queries. She owns and runs the Grand Malgudi Circus, which has been bequeathed by her master, Dadhaji. She is herself a

talented trapeze artist and head of the trapeze team which demonstrates to the spectators. She possesses a woman's heart filled with soft-heart, kindness and an instinctive love for all forms of life. She is very strongly against violence or bloodshed. Sudden ripping off of the neck of the innocent goat by Raja disturbs her very much. Captain speaks to Madan,

"You found the goat scene inspiring, but my wife Rita, although accustomed to circus life, felt sickened by the spectacle and retired; even now when she recollects the scene, she is in tears . . ."

Rita's expertise in performing acrobatic trapeze martial skills involving masculine physical prowess and sturdiness recalls one of the modern concepts of equality of woman with man in all walks of life. The peculiar trait of her personality lies in achieving in her a harmonious synchronization of the modern skill and technical excellence of a circus artiste with the characteristics of a loving, kind-hearted homely woman who is devoted to her family. She is as independent as her husband. Hermit's wife is simple minded, traditionlly-devoted wife. She is ready to accept her husband with all his shortcomings and weaknesses. Jaggu's wife is a puny woman who appears only once. She collects money from the spectators after the show in a village fair. She feels very happy when her husband is employed in a proposed film on a monthly salary of five hundred rupees.

Lyla is a number two in the trapeze team. She also appears once at the time of Captain's order to perform the new item.

There are five female characters in the novel, Talkative Man. Sarasa, Girija, Sarasa's mother, Girija's grandmother and station master's wife. Besides these, there are few women from different parts of the world who fall a victim to the deceitful ways of Dr. Rann. Komal, a nurse in Matilda's is also one of them. Sarasa is a modern woman who attempts to reclaim her erratic, elusive husband, who is a wanderer, a philanderer; she is a Police Officer and is a strong woman both in her looks and temperament. Girija, whose home name is Baby, is the granddaughter of the Town Hall librarian. She is a sweet tall girl of seventeen-year-old, studying in the final year of B.A. in a college in Malgudi she is grown up under the care of her grandparents. She, with all her unripe age, simplicity and innocence, comes completely into Dr. Rann's vile clutches who planned to elope with her and seduce her and leave her to her fate like many other women. But Gaffur, the taxi driver and TM fail his plan to inform her wife Sarasa to come immediately and capture her looting husband. Sarasa's mother is a woman with shrewd common sense and sound instinct. She is aware of her daughter's movements. She is practical-minded and can discriminate falsehood from truth. On the contrary, Girija's grandmother is a simple-minded old lady. She fails to understand the underlying evils of Dr. Rann.

The station master's wife is an ordinary, kind-hearted, simple lady. She always busy in fulfilling her domestic duties. She is sentimental at the time of Sarasa's departure for Delhi.

In *The World of Nagaraj*, Sita, Charu, Saroja and Nagaraj's mother are four female characters. Narayan again moves towards the traditional set of women characters, Sita is more of a prototype of her legendary namesake than a modern woman. But she soon evolves in to a more confident person after a few years of her marriage. She is always present as an emotional support to her husband. In comparison to Sita, the daughter-in-law Saroja is educated, vocal, bolder, assertive, frank and unlike her not at shy. She is modern fashioned girl whose interest lies in film songs and not in classical traditional songs. She also works as a singer in the tavern, Kismaet, for some time. Charu is the wife of the Nagaraj's elder brother, a haughty woman, who keeps her husband in and on her finger tips and believes more in a nuclear family. The mother of Nagaraj is another example of the very old generation of Indian women, who love her children and is lost after her husband's death.

The story of *Grand Mother's Tale* is simple and is set in a period nearby year nineteen hundred. It is one of the first work of R.K. Narayan which is non-Malgudian and instead of Malgudi, mention is made of real places like Pandaripur, Kasi, Pune, Kumba Konam and Kolar etc. Major

characters in the story are Ammani -the narrator and daughter of Bala is bold strong lady who is social and busy. She is devoted to her family and mother also. Bala- great Grand mother and heroine of the novel, Surma- the caring wife who is deceived by Bala and Vishwa, the gem expert, is shown to be cared for, by three wives and in-law. He believes in forgetting past, initially his parents, later his first wife Bala and at last his wife Surma. He forgets his earlier persistence that Surma had cared for him for long and may die in his absence. He is impulsive (leaves for Pandaripur at the age of ten without informing anybody and leaves kolar all alone at fag end of his life). Anybody caring for him earns his admiration may it be Surma, Bala, Lakshmi or new wife and her mother. He is unable to take a stand before his wives, even if they are wrong (Bala's excesses towards Surma or new wife's tantrums). Other minor characters worth mentioning are Talkative man (the author himself), Bala's mother, Lakshmi – daughter –in-law of Vishwa and Vishwa's mother-in-law- the caretaker. In Grand Mother's Tale, we are introduced to the perfect woman Bala who works like a slave for her house, advises her husband like a mantri, travels to far off places, all alone, looks like Goddess Lakshmi, is patient like mother earth and courtesan-like in bed chamber. She has average features and is being compared to Savitri who snatched her husband Satyvan (Vishwa) from Yama. She is bold, fearless of kotwal, and observant of face expressions initially and later on again, behind

his husbands whiskers. She is respectful to elders. Before leaving the town she gives information to her mother and mother-in-law that she is going to search her husband. She is a staunch believer in God. Narayan has painted her character very strongly with all possible colours. She is bold, assertive and enduring and is able to bring back Vishwa to the village. She behaves as a perfect woman.

“Perfect woman must work like a slave, advise like a mantri (minister), look like Goddess Lakshmi, be patient like Mother earth & courtesan like in the bed chamber”<sup>10</sup>

Bala's mother and Lakshmi are typical Indian women, caring for their husbands, wards, and respectful to their elders. The caretaker, a believer in local wiseacre and a greedy woman also is painted to be more concerned about welfare and future of her daughter. Bala is married at the age of seven only. Her husband Vishwa, nearly ten years old leaves with a group of pilgrims for Pandaripur without informing anybody except Bala. Bala is later on haunted by villagers and advised to live a widow under the impression that her husband must be dead. Outraged Bala leaves all alone, in search of Vishwa, comes across him leading a happy married life with Surma but he refuses to recognized Bala. Bala ultimately succeeds in bringing back Vishwa and dies as 'Suhagan' after a happy married life in Kumba Konam.

Vishwa lives for sometimes with his son, feels that he is being ignored and comes back to this old house. Under an impulsive and wrong decision Vishwa remarries a young girl and is ultimately poisoned by his new greedy mother-in-law. Ammani is a bold strong-headed lady who is social and busy. She cares a lot for her daughter and grandson. Her memory is good. She can not listen to anything against her mother. She believes in the concept of a perfect woman, that to a woman, her husband is everything. Surma has been shown to be a simple, meek woman who is out to help Bhatji (respectful name of Vishwa) and is considerate to Bala as well. She marries Vishwa against her father's wishes in Triambaka and remains respectful loyal and caring to him. The novel is silent about her children or fate after Vishwa is being snatched away by Bala. She falls easy prey to Bala's trap but goodness of her heart does not allow threatening Bala to drown herself and she retreats from the scene. Ammani and Bala is self-centred, Ammani does not mention about Surma's kids and threatens to stop the story if Bala is called a deceiver. Bala can make Bhatji worried and ill and is not ready to take Surma, her shelter giver, along with her even if later (Bala) is given the status of wife and still she is perfect woman according to her daughter, Ammani. R.K. Narayan has present the boldness and assertive of Bal of year 1900 or so in such a convincing manner that she can be easily compared to bold modern new woman of the coming years.

In 'The Guide' and 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' Narayan depicts Rosie and Rangi- the former as an educated woman who has succeeded in rising above the wretched state of a traditional devadasi, and her marriage with an archeologist has changed her misfortune while the latter is still a temple woman leading the life of a prostitute. In South India, especially in Karnataka this social ill is still existing and devadasis are very common in the name of traditional religion. The presentation of the problem of devadasis is not only realistic but also indicative of the fact how this social evil has been existing in Indian society from time immemorial:

"The so-called sacred prostitution of devadasi has been referred to by Alberuni. It was a very ancient institution - - Medieval literature - - refers to the institution of devadasi, but these source scarcely attach any sacred character to the devadasi system - - - it is mentioned that the devadasis earned their livelihood from the temple and the profession and income accruing from it was hereditary - - - the temples employed more than one devadasi who took their turn while performing before the god".<sup>11</sup>

In Karnataka the practice of devadasi has proved a burning problem and our government has shown deep concern to exterminate it from its very



root. Narayan in his novels does not give detailed references to the practice of devadasis. Rosie only mentions that she belongs to the family of a temple woman while Rangi is presented as serving as a devadasi in the temple and tempting people to continue the practice of prostitution. The most important victim of her temptation is Vasu who is himself a devil-incarnate. Even Nataraj fails to resist the temptation of Rangi's charm as he points out :

“She was dark, squat, seductive, overloaded with jewellery, the flowers in her hair were crushed, and her clothes rumped, she had big round arms and fat legs and wore a pink sari - - - anyway, whatever may be the hour, every inch of her proclaimed her what she was, a perfect female animal”.<sup>12</sup>

But Nataraj's views are personal. Rangi is shot into life and ennobled in such a way as to present herself as a faithful devadasi to her profession. It is nobody else but Rangi who discloses the secret of Vasu's intention to shoot the temple – elephant, Kumar. This disclosure is enough to warn Nataraj and his companion to save Kumar and cope with the nefarious design of the man-eater. But side-by-side, Rangi is also shown to have growing reluctance towards the practice of prostitution. She would like to be the life-long mistress of Vasu rather than continue as a devadasi. It shows how a devadasi is fed up with the practice of prostitution and willing to get

rid of her present hell. But alas nothing comes out of such a fictitious hope. Her hope is sacrificed on the altar of her professional duty. She can not allow Vasu to shoot the temple-elephant.

In 'The Guide', Rosie is presented as a developed character who has risen above from the status of a devadasi. She herself tells Raju that she belongs:

“ - - - to a family traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers; my mother, grandmother, and, before her, her mother. Even as a young girl I dance in our village temple - - - we are viewed as public women - - - We are not considered respectable; we are not considered civilized”.<sup>13</sup>

Rosie's mother planned a different life for her. She provided her education upto a post-graduation level because she had realized that it would enable Rosie to rise above the wretched state of a devadasi and get married with a man of status. The cherished hope of Rosie's mother was translated into reality and Marco came forth as a man of status to marry Rosie. But, as is usual, Marco was induced to marry the daughter of a devadasi, but he failed to give her his whole heart as a husband. His intense attention towards paintings, ruins and old art prevented him from adjusting to a proper married state. He began to ignore a full-blooded wife, who easily fell a victim to Raju

well - versed in the art of exploiting the situation in accordance with his choice and opportunity. The indication of the novelist is clear that such a man as Marco may show his sympathy and marry an educated devadasi but will not be able to adjust with her in domestic life. The adjustment requires a sense of balance between thought and practice. Marco who is devoted to lifeless images, stones, shrines and ruins and detached from conjugal pleasure, is certainly bound to pay the unexpected penalty for his imbalance.

There is no doubt that Narayan's deep concern is with the social problems and the eradication of the evils which still prevailing in Indian society. But this can not be a deplorable aim for an artist. The birth of a daughter is hardly a matter of rejoicing in a middle class family. The reason for this reluctant attitude towards the daughter is obvious. Parents are supported to bring her up with a haunting desire to face the unbearable demand of dowry from bridegroom's side. The stock of the bridegroom rises in accordance with inflation and the advancement of new civilization. How an optimistic father of a bridegroom is to declare that new investment in housing, whose value can never come down, the most secure 'gilt-edge' is an unmarried son. Things are contrary to those who happen to be unfortunately the people from bride's side. The father of a son in this way appears to be a seller and that of the daughter a buyer. Undoubtedly, matrimony in Hindus more particularly has become a seller's market. An enthusiastic father like

Narayan who had only daughter, Hema Narayan to marry, could have easily expressed his chagrin before the seller of a son:

“My daughter is a priceless possession. I have had her for sixteen years now; I don’t know how I am going to be without her. She is valuable as far as I am concerned and unhappy to part with her, so I am not selling her; I shall give her away provided you satisfy these two conditions. I must have a confidential report from one of the daughter –in-law in your house, on the outlook and conduct of the elders at home, and I want a psychologist to examine your son and give him a certificate of soundness.”<sup>14</sup>

But it is hardly possible for a middleclass Indian father of a daughter to open his mind so freely before the parents who have groomed a son properly to the extent of sweeping the hours in all examinations. One who is selected for an administrative career is the actual dictator of the prices these days. The system of dowry has proved a curse in society. Innocent daughters of poor fathers who are not able to concede the surmountable demands of the bridegroom’s parents fall victim to murders, brutal attacks and constant retribution. Narayan suggests that there is hardly any way to abolish dowry because the victim himself being an abettor. If it is made illegal, a black-

market is bound to evoke from repression. If sell-tax is levied on the transactions involving a bride-groom, it may again presumably shifted on to an already over burdened father of a girl. Therefore, it is worthwhile to recognize the institution and workout a table of payments and presents in order to provide at a glance the liabilities to be incurred by a would-be Sambandi:

“First class in competitive examinations: Rs. 45000  
plus a 20 H.P. motor-car, model not earlier than  
October 1953; engineering grade :Rs. 15000, jeep,  
plus a miniature locomotive in solid gold; M.Sc.  
(Nuclear Physics): Rs. 15000, plus five acres of land  
containing thorium, lignite etc; pilot with ‘A’  
certificate :Cash, plus a helicopter for private use;  
third class B.A., without any property : Rs. 5000,  
plus a bicycle or an autorickshaw (if he chooses to  
make a living out of it).”<sup>15</sup>

There may be some degree of difference between conditions in South India and in the rest of the country, but there can be no denying the fact that the middle class people are in the tight grip of this dreadful monster of dowry. Married girls, particularly those whose parents are unable to afford the desired dowry are not only belabored inhumanly but also ought to face

the ordeal of being burnt alive. Such incidents of dowry-cases have become voracious news in magazines and newspapers these days. How painful and ironical is it to imagine.

“Marriages are, of course, made in heaven but they  
are a business in our part of universe - - - - .”<sup>16</sup>

In *The Bachelor of Arts* the status of the girl's family should also equal theirs. She believes in dowry as it is proper and prestigious for a good marriage about dowry she says,

“It is the duty of every father to set some money apart  
for securing a son-in-law. We can not disregard  
custom.”<sup>17</sup>

She tells her son that she too brought good amount of dowry from her father's house. In *The Painter of Signs*, the Bank Accountant wife's reactions to Raman's getting married out of caste and religion are thoroughly on the traditional line of thought. Unlike Raman's old aunt, She also believes in observing the customs and rituals which are sanctioned since olden times. She tells Raman that he has spurned a proposal in the last days to marry a girl who will have brought him a good dowry. In comparison to these attitudes, the system of dowry is no more compulsory with passing time. We see in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Bharti's marriage with Sriram, there is no scene of traditional marriage-ceremony. In *The Painter of Signs*, Daisy's

marriage is like a Gundharva Vivha style with Raman or in his second last novel Talkative Man; Sarasa's marriage with Rann is not conventionally arranged. The ritual of marriage is performed without the pomp and show of lights, drums or any dowry.

As caste-system has been prevailing in India, Malgudi's citizens are shown caste-conscious. South Indians are also caste -conscious and the middle class Hindus prefer to be vegetarian so as to follow the traditions of their past. They are distinguished from people belonging to other sects in the way of their special preference to lead a conventional life. Since Narayan's range is limited and he presents in his novels a cross -section of varied humanity, preferably of Hindu middle class, he shows his characteristic concern to present the problems and predicament of people tormented by the flux of cultures. Caste-system in the past had resulted into a beneficial experience because people had concentrated to their particular duties graded by the system. But with the passage of time, as other cultures invaded the old Hindu culture of the Ramayana and the Mahabharat, a considerable change began to appear in the social set-up of India. Since the wake of independence the rigidity of caste-system has been extenuated by and by. Narayan's later novels - 'Waiting For the Mahatma', 'The Guide', 'Second Opinion', 'The Vendor of Sweets' and 'The Painter of Sings', indicate that the consciousness of the caste-system has lost its vitality. Sriram in 'Waiting for

the Mahatma' prefers to marry a girl irrespective of caste and creed. Her beautiful figure blossomed with prime youth and noble character is a sufficient proof of her matrimonial qualification. The advent of Gandhi ji on the Indian stage proved an overwhelming menace to the rigidity of caste-system. In 'The Painter of Sings', the Bank Accountant 's wife object that he is marrying a woman who is out of their caste. Nevertheless, caste has lost no identity. It is there, very much there in Indian Hindu society. It is only spiritually that the distinction of caste is not made. The faith of common people who appear in Narayan's fiction is filtered through the conviction in traditional gods and goddesses, saints and seers, temples and shrines, priests and prophets. Even children are conscious of this faith. They are God-fearing as almost a large section of middle class Hindu is, throughout India. Narayan uses symbols to present the India of his own viewpoint. For example, the temple is the symbol of peace and serenity. Shrines and caves, rivers and pilgrimages help Hindu people to come together as a community and survive the old cultural past of India. People living in towns are less credulous and orthodox than villagers who are easily befouled by fake saints and fraud priests, certain typically Indian traits, such as showing hospitality to the extent of inconveniencing the host as in 'The Guide', Raju greets Rosie warm heatedly when she comes to him bag and baggage after having been abandoned by her husband. Marco, and the astonishingly affectionate



reception of Raju by villagers signify the richness and distinctness of Indian Hindu culture.

Thus inspite of caste and culture people have close kinship with one another. They are selfish because their personal interests collide with the impersonal ones. As human nature is varied and man is said to possess double nature. He is bound to be at conflicting state of affair. Those who do not uproot themselves from the old links of the past lead a better life then that of rootless people who sink deeper and deeper into the mud of confusion and perplexity. This is not only the condition of South Indian middle class men depicted in his fiction by Narayan but middle class society as a whole in India. Man is torn within when he is uprooted; he comes to grief when he, separated at all from his kith and kin, moves to a new world of experience and endurance. So long as the protagonists of Narayan's novels are South Indian and corresponding with their roots, they are free from mental aberrations pant-up hearts, and unnecessary worries of life. The moment they begin to abandon their normal way of living and looking at the world reality, they are nowhere. This is what is happening in India on account of muddle of several cultures into one.

The Navarati festival is celebrated in 'The Dark Room'. Savitri has a stock of fine dolls and toys to be used on this festival. S it is traditional to invite neighbours and relatives to participate in the celebration, Narayan

depicted this scene realistically and shows how such festivals are significant in uniting the whole community together. In 'The Guide' the Dusshera and Diwali festivals are described in order to draw the picture of happy moments when anybody becomes of everybody. Raju, during the phase of sainthood is oblivious of the count of time, is reminded of these festivals by his disciples when they offer him gifts:

“When Dussehra came they brought in extra lamps and lit them, and the women were busy all through nine days, decorating the pillared hall with coloured paper in tinsel; and for Deepavali they brought him new clothes and crackers...”<sup>18</sup>

Narayan presents a factual criticism of life by showing how a false saint is tempting innocent villagers on the one hand. On the other hand, they themselves are prone to be such a fraud. Their superstitions a belief in the divineness of a saint and his mysterious powers has led them traditionally to rely on what he says. But the tradition of festivals in the society. In 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' the temple function, about which Vasu creates the fuss, also indicates the spirit of the people to believe that unity is strength. That is why; Natraj and his companions are able to stand together against the evil-doer Vasu who intends up to the last to disturb the normal order of the Malgudian society.

South Indian people are fond of special type of food in their dishes that they differ in this particular mode from their fellow-brothers in other provinces of the country. Almost all protagonists along with minor characters of Narayan's fiction retain their South-Indianness intact in the matter of food. For instance Tiffin is a special kind of food taken by South Indians. It includes rice, a few chhapatis, Sambhar, curd and a fried vegetable. In other provinces of the country where Hindi is the first language to be spoken the tiffin is the food container. Narayan's Malgudians depend on edibles, which are primarily produced in South India, and in this way, they are easily distinguished from other people of the country. In *The Dark Room* a picture of house kitchen is drawn, showing how the hero, Ramani feels embarrassed for having provided:

"Who selected the vegetables for this meal? – Why? -

- Brinjals, cucumber, radish and greens, all the twelve months in the year and all the thirty days in the month. I don't know when I shall have a little decent food to eat."<sup>19</sup>

He snubs Savitri for having tormented him with this cucumber for the dozenth time. Ramani is 'eccentric' and 'lawless' in his taste. It is not the repetition of cucumber which irritates him so much but because it is the 'cheapest trash in the market'. The supremacy and the tranquilizing qualities

of South Indian food can be discernible when one finds the opportunity to have a dinner in South India. The most important varieties of South Indian food are Rasam, Sambhar, Masala Dosa, Idli, Bonda, pickles and plaintasin leaf. Narayan points out :

“ I’m more than ever convinced that the south Indian diet marks the peak in the evolution of culinary art and that the south Indian, however well he may be received, will never feel reality at home anywhere in the world unless he can have his spices too within reach.”<sup>20</sup>

Himself a vegetarian at all, Narayan suggests,

“ - - - the eating of beef may not sound abnormal in most part of the world, but in India where the cow is a sacred object, beef can not be eaten, no rationalization is ever possible on this subject.”<sup>21</sup>

Narayan also uses his subject-matter from his own region of Tamil-spoken people who are accustomed to speak common English language. In

‘The Guide’ Raju’s mother asks to Rosie,

“Do you understand Tamil ?

She replies, “Yes. It’s what we speak at home.”<sup>22</sup>

Narayan choose south Indian character from the Hindu middle class families. In spite of the pressure of modern western culture, the Indian traditions have got their own values to be granted. They are reflected through ceremonials, festivals, fairs, customs and conventions, manners and mannerisms.

R.K. Narayan is a superb artist whose some aspects of rare experience fertilize his imagination, with the intention of striking sufficiently deep down into the fundamentals of his personality in order to kindle his creative spark. That is why; Narayan's achievement is limited to that part of his work that deals with the aspects of his experience. However, the problems of the South Indian Society in respect of social, political and economical spheres are touched upon incidentally, indirectly and within the framework of Malgudi.

The protagonists of Narayan are amalgamation of individual and type in almost all his novels. They are individual because they have a similar quest for identity with the aim to get in touch with the reality. In course of their way to their target they face odd circumstances, twist and turns, and several ups and downs of their human fate. They bear weakness and nervousness under the pressure of difficult situations, which ironically much more, help them to survive into spiritual maturity. They are typical in the sense that they represent the living human beings in the coexisting surroundings and do not seem alien at home, at least in the end when they go

away or vanish into life. As already mention by Santa Rama Rao that the aim of the Hindu is not to earn happiness in the western sense, but desirelessness and sacrifice. Narayan's protagonists just from 'The Bachelor of Arts', to 'A Tiger For Malgudi' are engaged in a perpetual struggle to achieve spiritual maturity as well as psychological consistency. However Narayan uses general psychology for the reason to read and scrutinized the workings of common people's minds. The protagonists are not able to restrain or control their wishes, which become obsessed with odd and strange ideas. For example in the novel 'Mr. Sampath', Mr. Sampath and his company with Srinivas is likely to yield good output through the weekly paper 'The Banner.' But Shanti becomes instrumental in getting him to turn off from his routine self. He forgets his responsibilities and undertakes to participate in a film 'The Burning of Karma' – He convinces Srinivas to write the film and the old man (the landlord) to provide financial support. But in the end the shooting of the film is interrupted by Ravi who also works there as an artist. In 'The Financial Expert' Margayya's appetite for money and happy living leads him in face shaky situations, which take him away from his real self. He becomes normal and happy only when he succeeds in overcoming his greed.

R.K. Narayan is both a prolific and popular Indian writer, writing in English in his Malgudian environment, a brilliant and realistic image of

India, with changes in Malgudi symptomatic of broad changes in India. Narayan's portrayal of women can be studied from twin foci. Malgudi is a brilliant image of India. Whatever has happened in India has happened in Malgudi and whatever has happened in Malgudi has happened in India. Through his women character's Narayan has captured the changing position of women in India from their tradition-bound ethos. A woman in his early novels belongs to the 'Sita Savitri' tradition. The Dark Room provides a patent example but his later novels depict the other extreme of women bold, assertive and independent. Daisy of The Painter of Signs and Roja of the Talkative Man illustrate this feature. In Daisy, Narayan has shown the individual potential of the Indian Woman. Study of the seminal role of these women in family affairs is interesting. Despite the fact that Narayan's characters are predominantly men, women have been portrayed with an equal amount of realism and fidelity to life. This is due to the fact that Narayan is a complete realist as a novelist, portraying life with the detachment of an artist. In the early novels, the women are just as they were in the pre-independence era. Transition and conflict of tradition and modernism is evident in the novels written by the author in the middle phase. Modernism has finally captured Malgudi and shaken the roots of tradition in his later novels. The transition of Narayan's women from Savitri of The Dark Room to Daisy of The Painter Signs fortifies foregoing statements.

In fact this generation of the female character is present in almost all the novels of Narayan including the latest *The World of Nagaraj* (1990) and *The Grand Mother Tale* (1992). The reason for this could be that they provide an excellent contrast with the 'new women or modern women' and also because Narayan being a realist knows that the older generation of woman in India, age still similar to their counter part of pre-independence era.



## Notes

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# **Chapter – 3**

**Heterogeneous Faces of Women :  
Representative of  
Typical Indian Woman**

In the early novels Narayan has been strongly affected by his personal experiences. He freely, yet judiciously borrows matter from his own life, in order to translate them into realistic tales of authenticity. Being autographical in spirit, and Narayan's world being limited to his home in the beginning, these novels offer similar themes of childhood, love, marriage etc. Narayan's novels, like classical Tamil literature, fall into two main divisions: 'akam' (The home) and puram (The outside-power, wealth, politics). In his later novels Narayan does not return to these early themes of childhood, romantic love and marriage, and the place of women in traditional society closely and sympathetically observed from the inside.

One of the themes deftly and thoroughly worked in the early novels is the domestic one. Family life is the intimate registering of the Hindu tradition, since this tradition, like the Hebrew one, enfolds both the ultimate and the immediate texture of experience, embracing both the ground of being and the ground under foot. To distinguish what is proper from what is improper, therefore, was of the highest importance. It was as Narayan shows, the duty of the women to translate and refine the principles of orthodoxy and correctness in to codes and etiquettes covering the basic drives for food, shelter, sex and company. In *The Bachelor of Arts* Narayan engages his readers with this theme by means of a bewitching account, bantering, accurate and tender, of the intricate formalities of the Indian marriage

system. In The Dark Room he works through a direct examination of marriage itself.

In Swami and Friends there are two female characters, Swami's mother and his Granny. They have been portrayed as tradition bound, religious and orthodox. The home and its happiness are their first ambition and desire. The hero of the novel is child-protagonist Swaminathan, the story of the novel revolves around him hence, and his family life occupies a secondary place. Swami's mother appears for a short time in the novel. She is a housewife and her purpose in life is to bear and breed children. Patience, love and sacrifice are qualities deep rooted in her. The menfolk of the house are special for her. The husband is the master of the house, whose requirement has to be satisfied urgently. She has no desire for a role to play in planning the life of her children, she is always ready to make arrangements to fulfill the wants of her children. She knew very well that if she fails in her duties she would be scolded. She does not have the courage to express her hardship independently to the child.

Second and the last female character in the novel is Swami's Granny. She is old, liberate, kind, helpless and religious. She is enthusiastic, affectionate and kind to Swami. She is more generous and large- hearted towards Swami than his mother. She never complains to his father against Swami. Swami feels relaxed in the company of his Granny. Granny and

Swami share their feelings with each other. Swami shares the experiences of his school adventures with her. Unlike other grannies, Swami's Granny tells him things of her past life. She is an illiterate and benign old lady, who lived in an 'ill-ventilated dark passage between the front hall and the dining room'. Swami feels soothed in the company of his granny. She was one of the most important parts of his life.

“After the night meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nesting close to her, Swaminathan felt very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves.”<sup>1</sup>

In Swami and Friends, Swami's mother and his grandmother have been sketched as traditional Indian women. The grandmother must have led a life similar to that of her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law can foresee her future in her mother-in-law. The family and its well-being is their primary ambition. Love, sacrifice, patience abound in them. The men folk of the house are special for them. For the wife, the husband is the lord and master of the house, whose needs have to be fulfilled at all times. The mother is ever present to cater to the wants of her children. If ever she fumbles in her duties towards her children she is sure to be reproached. The grandmother is there to tell her grandchild little tales of ancient kings. She is always free to listen to his wild stories. She is generous and forgiving

towards him. She is benign, talkative and she influences him in his formative period. She is a prototype of thousands of Indian grannies, who uphold the values of traditional society.

In The Bachelor of Arts, Chandran's mother steals the show in comparison to the younger female characters, Malathi and Sushila, who do not get the opportunity to speak out even a single dialogue. The young ladies have been portrayed through Chandrans' eyes. Chandrans's mother is a traditional, orthodox, religious and homely woman who represents 'custom and reason', knows 'what is proper and what is not proper'. As a mother, she loves her son very much and always remains absorbed in thoughts of his welfare. In the matter of Chandran's marriage, she adheres uncompromisingly to principles of social propriety. To go beyond the old customs and rituals is sacrilegious. She tries tooth and nails to agree Chandran to leave the idea of marrying with Malathi.

"Sixteen!" mother screamed. "They can't be all right if they have kept the girl unmarried till sixteen. She must have attained puberty ages ago. They can't be all right. We have a face to keep in this town. Do you think it is a child's play". She left the room in temper."<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately she cools down, when she finds her Chandran is very gloomy to think about his mother's attitude. So she gives her consent to marry a girl of her son's choice. But she insists in following old customs. In the middle class tradition ridden ambience, the image of women is limited to the fulfillment of the needs of all the family members.

For her, events have value only in so far as they reflect a 'proper order' prescribed in time-honored formulas. As a result she is seen cautioning, cajoling and advising Chandran from time to time. She is deeply hurt to know that girl's father is a Head Clerk, finds no match of their status, as her husband is a retired District Judge and jet no proposal coming from their side. She resists, Chandran's intention of sending marriage proposal from her house. She thinks it will degrade her position in society.

"Whatever happened they would not take the imitative in the mater, for they belonged to the bride groom's side, and according to time honoured practice it was the bride's people who proposed first. Anything done contrary to this would make them the laughing stock of the community."<sup>3</sup>

She is very upset on learning the amount of money the girl's side is going to spend but she accepts all this for her son's sake. It does not means that she wants dowry. It is because she is thinking of how people will react



when they come to know all this. She is anxious about her prestige in society. She says,

“We must not be too exacting, nor can we cheapen ourselves...” “We have a status and a prestige to keep. We can’t lower ourselves unduly.”<sup>4</sup>

She sternly rejects Chandran’s suggestion that he gets the horoscope himself from Malathi’s house.

“First, our astrologer must tell us if your horoscope can be matched with the girl’s, and then I do not know what their astrologer will say. Let us hope for the best. After that, they must come and invite us to see the girl.”<sup>5</sup>

She considers that it is Malathi’s father’s trick that he may not have to spend money on the occasion of marriage. She is outraged with her son for putting them into this precarious condition.

“This is what we get from our children for all our troubles. . . . I am in a mood to let him do anything he likes . . . But what more can we do ? I shall drown myself in Saryu before I allow any proposal to go from here.”<sup>6</sup>

But her love for Chandran is clearly seen when he is far away from his house. After Chandran's coming back home his father accepts that mother was extremely upset about him and thinks that he is in terrible. She is horrified to think about the earlier incident so she does not like to send him to Madras only for few days.

She has fatalistic beliefs bout marriages. She tells Chandran couples are made in heaven, not by man's choice. She also gives reference of her own marriage with Chandran's father. She emphasized the fact that it is the matter of fate. She says,

"You can marry only the person who you are designed to marry and at the appointed time. When the time comes, let her be ugliest girl, she will look all right to the destined eye."<sup>7</sup>

She is a very religious lady too. She daily worships gods. She gets angry when she does not find a single flower from the garden for puja. She tells Chandran's father that they are spending thirty-five rupees per month for getting nothing. Chandran and his father catch the thief who comes in early hours in the morning to pluck the followers. But when mother finds that it was a sanyasi, she orders her son to let him go. Indian society is intensely traditional and caste – ridden. In our society arranged marriage is a common phenomenon. The whole transaction besides the choice of the girl,

too becomes the mother's responsibility. If there is anything amiss, she is ready with her barbs and sarcastic comments. She sticks to all conventional rituals even when ultimately Chandran is married to a girl of her own choice. She belongs to the first group of Narayan's female characters, who are typical Indian house wives. Such women are anxious regarding the welfare of their husbands and children. As she time passes, she becomes more assertive and independent. Like other house wives in Narayan's novels and stories Chandran's mother is a representative of old age customs and traditions.

The Dark Room was published in 1938. It is a short, simple novel, written at an early period of the novelist's career, yet it exhibits a candid picture of social life of India when the country has just begun to see the influx of modernity. There are a variety of female characters in the novel but the major female character or the heroine of the novel is Savitri. She is very beautiful and deeply devoted to her husband. She is married to Ramani in a middle class Brahmin family. Ramani, the Office-Secretary of Englandia Insurance Company is tyrannical and egoistic husband and hence governs his house according to his own will. In the opening scene of the novel he appears as a dominant husband and father. The environment in his house is mostly gloomy and his wife Savitri, children Babu, Sumati, Kamala and servant always remain in terror without any reason. He forces Babu to go to

school despite his having fever. When Savitri tries to intercede on behalf of the child, he rebukes her and dismisses her by saying that she has no business to interfere with his handling of the children. She is not wise enough to know whether the illness is fake or otherwise. He thinks that the kitchen is the only place fit for her. He says :

“Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown up boy to me. It is none of a woman’s business.”<sup>8</sup>

In the household the husband is the senior most partner and the wife is under his general guidance. He finds fault with preparation of food Savitri tolerates his unwarranted insulting behaviour and rudeness. Though they have been married for fifteen years, yet Savitri has received nothing from her husband except irritation and abuses. Savitri is traditional, religious, God fearing female. She eats her breakfast only after her husband leaves and also after she has worshipped her gods. She is a good housekeeper even if her husband thinks otherwise. She keeps the milk and other things locked so that the servant has no chance of pilfering them. She feels:

“Was there nothing else for one to do than attend to this miserable business of the stomach from morning till night.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Avesta,

“A good wife is one who is obedient to her husband.”<sup>10</sup>

Ramani is a capricious, bad tempered man but Savitri suffers all his misbehavior with patience. He does not spare any chance, to rebuke, scold or taunt his wife. The bullying husband who invites guests into the house without previous information and expects them to be fed. Ramani's illegal relationship with Shanta Bai who has been employed as Insurance agent in the Englandia Insurance Company brings out a strife in Savitri's life. Her husband Ramani forgets his duties for home enjoying night's escapades with Shanta Bai. Her doubt becomes clear when her friend or neighbor tells that she has seen Ramani with a woman in the theatre at night. Now Savitri finds herself in an intolerable condition and her patience remains no more. When Ramani returns home shedding away her old habitual weakness and tolerance, she asks him boldly about his relationship with Shanta Bai but Ramani diverts her attention to show his love for Savitri. She refuses to be touched by him.

“For you we are play-things when you feel like hugging and slaves at other times. Don't think that you could fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose.”<sup>11</sup>

She resists all his beguiling moves and reasserts that he will leave that 'harlot'. She gets free of his hold and speaks boldly:

"You are not having me, and her at the same time? I go out of this house this minute."<sup>12</sup>

She revolts against her husband's extra-marital relationship with other women and against her being treated as a mechanical doll by her husband; she deserts her husband and bangs the door on his face never to return. He abruptly speaks to her that she can leave the house at moment if she want but he does not allow her to take the children with her. She finds herself helpless in the male-dominated milieu of the Indian society. She throws all her jewellery at the feet of Ramani because she does not want to use anything, which belongs to him. She shirks from them as from pollution. Ramani comments her that some ornaments are given by her father. She replies with full of anger. 'Take them away, they are also a man's gift'. She speaks :

"I don't possess anything in this world. What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's."<sup>13</sup>

No champion of "Women's Lib" could have put more situations in which an uneducated middle class woman of India finds herself. A female child is a liability rather than an asset. From the minute it is born, the only

concern of the parents is to find a husband and hand over her responsibility to him. After that whatever the husband or his people do to the girl, she has to put up with, as a good wife or daughter-in-law. If things become unendurable it is just her fate. She must not expect her parents to interfere or to rescue her. 'What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman' asks Savitri:

"What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman? - the prostitution changes her men, but a married woman does not, that is all : but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner." <sup>14</sup>

Woman is a helpless creature to be guarded by her father as a child, by her husband in her youth and by her son when she is old. Being uneducated she is totally helpless against her husband's cruelties she leaves her husband's house at the moment in midnight. Savitri goes out of the house not dramatically banging the door like Nora, but fleeing like a hunted animal. And the husband firmly draws the bolt across the door, so that he can retire for the night and sleep in peace. Ruled by fear from the cradle to the funeral pyre and beyond, afraid of a husband's displeasure, of causing the least discomfort to him, of walking alone even a hundred yards from the house unescorted, of what one's neighbors might say, of what Yama may have for

one in the after-life, the slave who runs away parts with the only possession she has, namely security. She realizes had been the cause :

“And even beyond that, fear of torture in the other world, afraid of a husband’s displeasures, and of the discomforts that might be caused to him, morning to night and all night too. How many nights have I slept on the unchanged position, afraid lest any slight movement should disturb his sleep and cause him discomfort, afraid of one’s father, teachers and everybody in early life, afraid of once’s husband, children and neighbors in later life-fear, fear, in fear of being sentenced by yama to be held down in a cauldron of boiling oil.”<sup>15</sup>

Freedom is a fine concept, but creatures like Savitri can do only one thing with it – commit suicide. For the purpose of committing suicide she enters into the neck-deep water of the river Sarayu. Fortunately Mari the village blacksmith hears her cries and rescue her. Mari’s wife pooni persuade her to come to their village. But Savitri refuses saying that she will live in the open and will not take food or shelter at anybody’s mercy. She takes a vow that she will eat only food, which she earns by her own labour. But they fail to get a job for her in a house. Ultimately, she is employed by the priest



in the village temple for cleaning and sweeping the shrine and its whereabouts on half a measure of rice and a quarter of an anna each day. While staying in the temple at Sukkur, she feels home sick and remembers her children nostalgically. Her motherly affections overpower her previous rebellious, bitter self. She returns home for the sake of her children. Savitri is deeply rooted in tradition. Being of an upper caste, unlike Pooni, she is not able to present herself in her manner. Nor can she compete with Shanta Bai, the educated and modern woman. Being uneducated and a dependent, she is totally helpless against her husband's cruelties. She has no idea of the outside world. She may be a perfect housewife but her illiteracy limits her to her home. The two dark rooms first in the home and second one in the temple are used symbolically and reflect directly the limits of free choice and the implications of individuality.

Sriram's Granny in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is like an other old grannies portrayed in Narayan's other novels known by their qualities such as kindness, tolerance, superstitious, religious and orthodox follower of conventions. Her life is very much typical of a Hindu middle class old lady. She is illiterate and having worldly wisdom like the other grannies. Her age has taught her farsightedness. She suffers from some idiosyncrasies which make her an interesting personality. She is sharp-tongued in her responses. She has maturity of mind that is gained by her age and experience. She is

both father and mother for her grandson. Her kindness for her grandson is incomparable. Her far-sightedness lie in saving the amount of the military pension of Sriram's father in the bank named Fund Office.

“When the envelop came she invariably remarked : ‘I don’t have to spend your pension in order to maintain you. God has left us enough to live on.’ Then she took it to the forth house in their row ...”<sup>16</sup>

She is the woman of iron will and great rectitude, scrupulously spending to the bank all the amount which is received on behalf of her grandson and hand over the account to him on the occasion of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is loving and caring granny. She is shrewd and gives advise to Sriram to make proper use of money and be secretive in money matters and mix up with people of his age so that he can become an expert in worldly ways. She also guides him to follow his grandfather's footsteps. But she thinks that Sriram resembles his grandfather physically only and has not inherited any of his intellect. She seemed to rule only in the four walls of the house. But as soon as she steps out ‘lost her stature.’ While going to the Fund Office with Sriram, they meet Kanni, whom she does not like. Because his friendship had supported her husband to smoke. She says about smoker,

“ . . . like a baby sucking a candy stick. She was won't to remark, disturbing the even tenor to their married life.”<sup>17</sup>

Sriram's granny is extremely worried of Sriram's taking interest in Gandhian flock. She advises Sriram not to take any interest in Gandhiji's movement and to marry a girl who is her distant relative in a village. She feels betrayed as villagers have told her that Sriram is after a girl not in Gandhiji's camp. She speaks with anger:

“What can a little cobra do even if you have brought it up on cow's milk. It can only do what its breeding tells it to do.”<sup>18</sup>

Sriram likes his grandmother but would prefer it if she left him alone. She never deals him as a mature man. When Sriram buys a canvas chair for her on which she refuses to recline for canvas because she believes it is a kind of a leather probably cow hide. Being a pious Hindu, she can not pollute herself by using it.

“How Granny bullies that ragged scavenger who comes to our house everyday to sweep the backyard, 'Granny was so orthodox that she would not let the scavenger approach nearer than ten yards, and

habitually adopted a bullying tone while addressing him.”<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi's ideas of abolition of untouchability and Harijan upliftment are anathemas to her. When the teacher argues with her, she finds herself in intolerable condition to listen the opinion of the teacher and speaks with anger, teachers like you ruin our boys and country.

Granny is delineated in contrast to Bharti. Whereas Bharti is a devoted Gandhian, Granny has all inverted ideas about Gandhism. She is very old, traditional, orthodox and talks in a showy manner to her friend, concealing what she does not want to reveal.

In the novel 'Mr. Sampath', Srinivas's wife and Sampath's wife is home bound, conservative, tolerant and unpretentious woman. Both of them are touched by ambition or by any sort of illusory idealism. Their desires, happiness and sorrows are confined to her family. Srinivas's wife conservative mentality becomes clear at the time of her entry in the novel when she reaches at her husbands press office named 'The Banner.' Srinivas remains totally engrossed in writing for the weekly periodical to the neglect of his wife and son, at her parents village. But her complaint very soon arouses his sense of duty. She speaks with tears in her eyes,

“What is the matter with you ? Why do you neglect us in this way ? You have not written for months. What

have I done that I should be treated like this ? Her voice was cracked with Sorrow. Srinivas was baffled . . . You treated me as if I were dead and made me the laughing stock of our entire village. I have had to write to you four times to ask if I may come.”<sup>20</sup>

She refuses to take food bring by Sampath from the restaurant because she is suspected to the purity of food. She has grown up in a village. She has the habit of taking food before her husband has taken it and believes home-made food is worth eating. She would prefer to starve rather than take restaurant food. Her son also complains that she has not taken any food on the way.

“Srinivas’s wife refusing to eat any thing on a train and unwilling to taste food which might not have been cooked by a Brahmin belongs to a world which has not yet quite disappeared, at any rate in the older generation. She will not go even to the end of the street to buy a little coriander for making rasam unless escorted.”<sup>21</sup>

She requires a male escort to go to nearby shop. She goes without vegetables if her son is not in the house for shopping. She says,

"This little fellow, Ramu, he was like an elder. I never knew he could take charge of me so well."<sup>22</sup>

She likes to go by public opinion about things. She says to Srinivas not to take outside food at a shop. She thinks it undesirable because people do not approve of it as suitable for domestic life. She suffers patiently the habitual negligent of Srinivas as the latter remains too pre-occupied with his weekly periodical, 'The Banner' and later on with the production of the film, 'The Burning of Karma' by the 'Sunrise Pictures' studio. She reminds him of his callous ignorance towards him as Srinivas comments on her complaining habit that it must be the same sort of causes over and over again about,

"His late-coming, secondly his lack of interest in home-management; thirdly, his apparent neglect of the child, fourthly, insufficient money, and so on — stretching on to infinity."<sup>23</sup>

Both of them are confined with own world, Srinivas to the world of speculation and his wife to the one of her mundane responsibilities of subserving the interests of her family. They fail to share each other's secret innermost being. Still, the harmony of their domestic life remains intact because each, especially his wife, is accommodating with the circumstances. Such an adjustment is a hallmark of the ambience of a conventional middle

class family. Like a traditional Hindu woman she daily worships the image of god Nataraj. She takes full interest in the shooting of the film, 'The Burning of Karma', because it is related with the mythology. She says that this subject is better than his weekly periodical. One day when Srinivas returns late at night with the latest copy of 'The Banner' and says to her wife that 'I hope you will find something to interest you at least this week.' But she was an uncompromising critic of the Banner and says to write something interesting. Srinivas himself realize that his wife is a good adviser.

"There is some deficiency in The Banner. I wish I knew what it was. Something makes it not quite acceptable to the people for whom it is intended. There is a lot of truth in my wife's complaint."<sup>24</sup>

Despite her accommodating, docile and unassertative nature, Srinivas is very sensitive to an authoritarian tone used by someone in dealing with her. She is considerate and co-operative towards others in their troubles. The old man also comments about her,

"I have always told a lot people to come and observe this lady for a model. How well she looks after the house. I wish modern girls were all like her."<sup>25</sup>

She discloses to her husband about Sampath's flirtation with Shanti and his resolve to marry her. She feels revolted at this. She sympathizes with

Sampath's wife and prevails upon Srinivas to dissuade Sampath from going astray on this wrong path. She reveals the same generosity and human concern for the mother and family of Ravi when the latter goes mad. She offers her house for holding the ritual of an exorcist in order to cure Ravi's madness. She readily agrees to Ravi's mother's request to look after her temperamental husband for a week when she will be away to a temple at Sailm alongwith Ravi for getting him cured of his madness. She gives twenty rupee to Ravi's family for help. She is hospitable to the miserly old landlord and serves him coffee and rice cakes for breakfast.

Sampath's wife is another female character in the novel but portrayed for a short time. She is timid and she does not have courage to object her husband's extra-marital relationship with Shanti. She is very short and wears Saree. She is a mother of five children and has no other aim in her life except to look after her family. Sampath never cares for his wife and children. She single-handedly deals her responsibilities. He tells Srinivas about his wife's disturbing mood at ten daily in the morning when she has to do much work for school going children. He says:

"She is in a terrible mood; just about the time when the children have to be fed and sent to school and shopping has to be done and some lapse or other on my part comes to light, and all sorts of things put her



into a horrible temper at that hour and she will be grumbling and finding fault with everyone.”<sup>26</sup>

She is so reserved that she can not even confront a visitor. She has never talked to any man other than her husband. She stands behind the door and does not come out in the open before Srinivas and tries to draw her husband's attention behind the door. Sampath's Says:

“Eh? What do you say? I can't follow you if you are going to talk to me in these signals. Why don't you come out of hiding? . . . What is the matter with you, behaving like an orthodox old crony of seventy-five, dodging behind doors and going into Purdha. Come on, come here, there is no harm in showing yourself.”<sup>27</sup>

She feels uncomfortable and blushes in his presence. There is an awkward silence between the two. Here husband who considers himself a though a man of the world can only laugh after discomfiture. She heaves a sigh of relief when Sampath tells her to go back. This shows her nervousness in facing a stranger. For an orthodox Indian like Sampath's wife, a guest is like God in disguise. Thus she would consider it a disgrace on her family tradition, if a visitor is not dealt in a hospitable manner. In this regard she is just like many other Indian women who have been brought up

conventionally. She is too weak to offer resistance against her husband's plan of marrying Shanti and fails to change her husband's mind.

Raju's mother in 'The Guide' is also home bound and orthodox woman character. Her life is also centered around her husband and her son Raju. Like a dutiful and Indian house-wife she keeps awake till her husband return home. She always advises him not to be careless in taking food. After her husband's death we find her, waiting for her son, which, according to the son, was nothing unusual. While serving him food, she, being a contentious and loving mother, enquires about how the son had spent his day. Her cleverness is obvious in her advice to her husband not to purchase a horse and jutka as it will mean extra-expenditure and later, it is proved correct. The groom plays a game upon him and in the end purchases the same horse and jutka with the money he has fraudulently saved from them. She is an affectionate mother, after her husband's death, without any qualms or tantrums, she permits Raju to close down the old shop and set up a new one at the Railway station. She advises Raju to keep himself limited to the running of the shop inspite of working as a tourist guide. She is anxious of Raju's carelessness and porter's boy's suspicious movements. She is shocked to know that Raju has lost his shop to the porter's boy to whom he has given the responsibility of running the shop. Rosie's affair makes Raju totally indifferent to his shop. Her mother has an uncanny understanding of

human ways. Like the other people of older generation she resists change :  
'Well, was it not good enough for your father.' She says in reference to the railway shop. She keeps reminding Raju of his duties, tries to drive him to reality, but all in vain,

"My mother facing me with numerous problems:  
municipal tax, the kitchen tiles needing attention, the shop, accounts, letters from the village, my health, and so on and so forth; to me she was a figure out of a dream, mumbling vague sounds."<sup>28</sup>

She knows Raju's habits very well so she is amazed when she finds him at home, at a time when he could never stay indoors. She fathoms the reason, which she realizes, is obviously Rosie. But when her son announces Rosie as a guest, she is most polite for a guest is equivalent to God in traditional India.

"Be seated on that mat, what's your name? She asked kindly and was rather taken aback to hear the name 'Rosie' She expected a more orthodox name. She looked anguished for a moment, wondering how she was going to accommodate a 'Rosie' in her home.  
'But . . . 'a guest was a guest, even though she might be a Rosie'."<sup>29</sup>

Rosie's stay at Raju's home shows the mother's qualities of tolerance and understanding. When she is told that Rosie had come unescorted, she is surprised by her courage. She tells Rosie that she had been to the market only once in her life. She cross-examines Rosie closely. But she is definitely impressed when she comes to know that Rosie is an educated girl.

“Good, good, brave girl. Then you lack nothing in the world. You are not like us uneducated women. You will get on anywhere. You can ask for your Railway ticket, call a policeman if some body worries you, and keep your money. What are you going to do? Are you going to join Govt. service and earn? Brave girl. ‘My mother was full of admiration for her’.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite all the praise showered on her, the mother can not take in the modern tendencies followed by Rosie. She was only being a hypocrite when she appreciates her. Raju's mother, being a traditional and orthodox woman can not understand the new girl Rosie. At first appearance when Rosie comes to Raju's house, she asks her about her name, place, purpose and whether married or unmarried and whether she has come alone or escorted by someone. She understands in a moment that Rosie is a married woman who has broken off her relations with her husband. Her sense of social propriety does not approve of such conduct. Her sense of social propriety

does not approve of such conduct. Many times we are reminded of Srinivas's wife who, too, is obsessed with public approval. She has faith, like conventional ladies, that the right place for a married woman is always with her husband and even in a miserable condition, a woman should not leave him. She explains all this to Rosie through anecdotes.

"Why can't she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these girls imagine. No husband worth the name was ever conquered by power and lipstick alone. You know your father more than once 'she narrated an anecdote about the trouble created by my father's unreasonable, obstinate attitude in some family matter and how she met it. I listened to her anecdote patiently and with admiration and that diverted her for a while. After a few days she began to allude to the problems of husband and wife whenever she spoke to Rosie, and filled the time with anecdotes about husbands; good husbands, bad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience,

that brought him round. She quoted numerous mythological stories of Savitri, Seetha, and all the well-known heroines."<sup>31</sup>

Raju neglects his mother's protests and turns the house into a dancing house. She says that she can not accept dancing all the time and it can not go on in the house forever. She secretly dreams for her son's marriage with her brother's daughter Lalitha. As a last resort, she calls Raju's uncle home in order to make Raju realize the impropriety of his act. But, Raju does not allow Rosie to go despite his uncle's anger and threats. So she decides to go with her brother and leaves her old house not so much in anger as in sadness. She is steadfast in not compromising with an act, she considers, socially unacceptable even if it entails making a great sacrifice like leaving her house to which she is emotionally attached. Being a religious and pious woman, she takes with her only the religious prayer books. In the end she is reconciled with what has happened as something fated to happen. She passes the rest of her life in peace with her brother.

Raman's aunt in *The Painter of Signs* is patient, tolerant, unassertative, orthodox, kind and a traditional old woman of nearly 78 years. She has deep faith religious, spiritual and social values. In this way, she is categories in the typical Indian woman as Narayan has depicted in his other novels. She was the daughter of priest and married to a police head-constable

in a nearby village. It was very bad luck for her that her husband had died in her young age. Since then, she has been leading her life barren and widow woman. She is deep rooted in religious beliefs of Hindu custom where remarriage of a widow is not concern. She never fails to go to the temple of Ganesh in the evening. She has maintained a separate puja room in her house. She takes meal once a day for many years. All the time she engaged in her domestic duties and her leisure time, village women comes to her to take valuable advice on domestic matters, some herbal remedy, listen to her prophecies from a horoscope and many other matters. Unlike other old lady of Narayan's novel Raman's aunt is too habitual of narrating the reminiscences of her past. She tells Raman, her grandfather's and her own girlhood life story.

"I was not born seventy-five or eighty year old." She continued, "When I was ten years old, I remember clearly that I could just reach up to a mirror hung on the wall in our house, to arrange my hair, which was wavy and streamed down to my hips. People came and admired me in those days."<sup>32</sup>

She asks Raman to write down her life story, which will give him fame and more money than writing sign-boards. She is submissive and hospitable to Daisy when she comes to meet Raman in connection to writing

a sign board for the family Planning Centre. Aunt serves her a cup of coffee and Daisy enjoys her reminiscent memories about her Poona grandfather. She disapproves of Raman's proposal to marry Daisy on the basis of her caste. Her Christian name Daisy makes her suspicious. Her illiterate, orthodox and innately simple mind can not reconcile with such an unconventional marriage. She finds a facile escape from the situation in deciding to proceed on a religious journey leaving everything behind in the care of Raman and thus allows him full freedom to manage his affairs in his own way after her departure. The void to be caused by his aunt's going away for ever is realized for the first time by Raman. Thus we see tradition gives way to modernism again. However, she does not wish to upset Raman's apple cart, which is very dissimilar from Chandran's mother's reactions in *The Bachelor of Arts*. She also expresses her will that she will spend her remaining life time on the bank of Ganges at Kashi. She says:

"It is like this, my boy. At my age, with a few years left, people do not generally want to return. A visit to Kashi is the end. I may live for ten days or ten years or twenty; it is immaterial how long one lives after this stage. It is the ambition of every-one of my generation to conclude this existence at Kashi, to be



finally dissolved in the Ganges. That is the most auspicious end to one's life." <sup>33</sup>

In, *The World of Nagaraj*, Sita is a fine example of a conventional, orthodox daughter-in-law and wife. The author depicts her in such an explicit manner that a live picture of her's comes before our mind. She is the wife of Nagaraj. At the time of their marriage she was fourteen and Nagaraj was under twenty at that time. In the beginning Sita behaves like a timid, hesitant and traditional housewife. She is very reserved with her husband. She tries to avoid him during the day and is always ready to follow her mother-in-law. She follows her instructions regarding domestic chores. She is very obedient and modest to the extent that she keeps privacy when she is talking to her husband. She dislikes talking loudly because the passerby in the street may listen to them. She is very self-conscious in her relations with Nagaraj when she sees people coming back from the temple. She goes away into the kitchen so that Nagaraj mother will hear that her daughter-in-law is busy in house hold work. Sita is cleaver, coy and behaves in consonance with the traditional rules and regulations of a middle class house wife of daughter-in-law. She is always careful about her responsibilities for home. She gets up at 5 o'clock early in the morning, washes clothes and after taking bath with cold water, prepares morning coffee. When her mother-in-law becomes old, she always bothers about her restlessness in perambulating

continuously around the house. She has to perform this duty independently as her sister-in-law has gone away to settle in the village. The growing annoyance to the mother-in-law in her extreme old age, occasionally, becomes a bone of contention between Sita and her mother-in-law. Sita's anger is not because of the old mother. She is upset many times due to her husband and other family members of the family, and has nothing to do with household responsibilities. This is the reason she speaks to Nagaraj:

“Please keep your mother in one place. I feel paralyzed when she is following me about, questioning and questioning. I can't cook or sweep or clean if I'm bothered like this.”<sup>34</sup>

But latter, instead of assuring her of his help, will give some indistinct reply and go away. However, the bond of warmth and emotional attachment with her mother-in-law comes in explicit evidence after the mother in laws death. She does her best to serve and satisfy her in her last days. Sita abounds in worldly wisdom. She is more practical-minded and far-sighted than her husband. She always tenders opportune advice to Nagaraj in various critical situations. Nagaraj also realizes the soundness and validity of his wife's wisdom. Sita, off and on, exhorts her husband to keep a tab on Tim's movements as his behaviour has become totally suspicious. Moreover as guardian and uncle of the boy, it is his duty to keep himself well acquainted

with the boy's activities. Sita is full of courtesy and maintains due respect towards the elderly members of her in-law's family. She shows him full regards. She is hospitable to him and serves him with coffee and delicious food. She is a good, efficient house-keeper. She shows no signs of stringency, narrow-mindedness or jealousy. She is thoroughly religious minded. After ablutions early in the morning, she performs puja in the puja room where the images of gods and goddess are reverently placed. Moreover, she feels shocked at the mention by her husband that he has purchased the cotton lamp-wicks in order to plug his ears. She considers it as a sacrilegious act. The stunned state of her mind is stated thus:

“She looked horrified and held the packet away from him. ‘What an evil notion! To misuse God’s lamp-wicks. I never thought you would stoop so low. Its’ a sin to misuse God’s wicks . . .”<sup>35</sup>

This class of women is either victim of the evil ridden society, of ignorance, or of noble ideas of sacrifice and stoic suffering for husband and children, or else they became symbols of inspiration, generosity, compassion, and patience. With their oddities and uniqueness, vagaries and vanity, faith and fickleness, they have yet to be rendered artistically in the novel.

In, *Grand Mother's Tale*, Bala's mother and Lakshmi the daughter-in-law of Vishwa are typical Indian women, caring for their husbands, wards, and respectful to their elders. The caretaker, a believer in local wiseacre and a greedy woman also is painted to be more concerned about welfare and future of her daughter.

The roles of women characters in the early novels are a mirror image of the women in the pre-independence India. These women were tradition bound, religious, and orthodox in their behavior. They were submissive, prone to exploitation both by the husband and her in-laws. Being uneducated, they had no weapons to fight with, rather being dependent upon the husband, they had to bow to the husbands' wishes in all matters. Society's attitude towards them was also one of patronizing condensation. It no doubt insisted that she should be properly cared for and attended to, but it did not take any effective steps to check the growing tendency to pass very uncharitable and utterly unjustified remarks about her nature and worth. It allowed the husband to trample under foot the marriage vow quite openly, but insisted that it should be followed by the wife, even if the husband were a moral wreck, like Ramani of *The Dark Room*.

## Notes

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2. R.K. Narayan: The Bachelor of Arts (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 1991) P. 70
3. Ibid., P. 70
4. Ibid., P. 84
5. Ibid., P. 83
6. Ibid., P. 73
7. Ibid., P. 158
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10. A.S. Altekar: The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization (Benares: The Culture Publication House, Benares Hindu University, 1938) P. 93
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12. Ibid., P. 111
13. Ibid., P. 113
14. Ibid., P. 120
15. Ibid., P. 116
16. R.K. Narayan: Waiting for the Mahatma (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 1997) P.5
17. Ibid., P. 6

18. Ibid., P. 118
19. Ibid., P. 19
20. R.K. Narayan: Mr. Sampath (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1990) P. 32, 33
21. P.S. Sundram: R.K. Narayan (New Delhi: Arnold Heinmann, 1973) P. 73
22. R.K. Narayan: Mr. Sampath (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1990) P. 33
23. Ibid., P. 38
24. Ibid., P. 47
25. Ibid., P. 53
26. Ibid., P. 144
27. Ibid., P. 85
28. R.K. Narayan: The Guide (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1990) P. 104
29. Ibid., P. 124
30. Ibid., P. 126
31. Ibid., P. 137
32. R.K. Narayan: The Painter of Signs (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1991) P. 19
33. Ibid., P. 152
34. R.K. Narayan: The World of Nagaraj (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1991) P. 32
35. Ibid., P. 140

# **Chapter – 4**

**Changing Aspects of Women :  
New Indian Women**

R.K. Narayan is a novelist whose artistic intent is not doubted in India. He is understandably indifferent to literary fashions of the West. He works on the two 'inches of ivory' of Malgudi, the imaginary locale of his novels typifies Indian towns growing into cities where Pariahs, teachers, clerks, printers, policeman, etc. live their routine life. As time passed, the activities and the boundaries of Malgudian women also expanded. The expansion of education and the thirst for independence followed. His women characters could be taken as a representative of the whole of India since the process of modernization has been the same everywhere.

The character of Shanta Bai in The Dark Room is a modern woman. She is an anti-thesis of Savitri in almost everyway. She is married to her cousin who is drunkard and gambler. She has availed the benefit of modern education. She is graduate and ambitious of independent life. She leaves him and her parents and receives education at Madras for making up an independent career. She has no love for the comfort, security and warmth of homely life. She does not care for her family or her husband. She remains lost forever, unmindful of female propriety. In comparison to Shanta Bai, Savitri renounces the home but she still has a link left with her children. They are a redeeming factor for her. She is an educated and self-made woman who is a stranger in Malgudi. Unlike Savitri, she does not like her husbands' habits of drinking and gambling so she deserts him. She speaks all this without any hesitation. She wants to forget all that and enjoys her



emotional freedom. She also becomes successful in achieving her economical independence. In contrast to her Savirti is very gloomy after leaving her home. She is hesitant to speak about her husband's conduct. Savitri contemplates that she never walked even a hundred yards away from home unescorted. Fear, 'Fear from the cradle to the funeral pyre's.' One woman who does not fear even public slander is Shanta Bai, who is an alien in Malgudi. She tells her life history as,

I was born in Mangalore. I was married when I was twelve . . . when I was eighteen I found he would not change, and so I left him. My parents would not tolerate it and I had to leave home.<sup>1</sup>

Shanta Bai is a social lady in search of an independent career. She works as a teacher for short time then she puts an application for the post of Insurance agent in Englandia Insurance Company. The Secretary of this company is enthralled by her beauty, voice and manner of speaking at first sight. She has probably got training on how a boss can be agreeably won over. Ramani, the Secretary of Englandia Insurance Company, falls in love with her and finds himself 'at the mercy of this applicant'. He rambles on to get some personal information about her life. She insists on her loneliness and helpless condition of unemployment to acquire sympathy.

It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education. It does not improve their lot a bit; it leaves them as badly unemployed as the men.<sup>2</sup>

He appointed her on some term and conditions that she will have to give a business of ten thousand rupees in starting two months. If she fails to fulfill her commitment, she will be suspended from the job and another person will be selected from the list. To listen all the terms and conditions, she seems unsatisfied. Ramani fear with suspect that she may turn down and refuse the proposal so he attempts to coax her by saying that he will increase her payment after some time. She accepts the offer and starts working in his office. Her appointment in Englandia Insurance Company creates different reaction in the mind of his colleagues. She gets benefit of his attention, a table, chair and separate screen are set up for her and also arrange a cot, a bench, some vessels, a room for her stay in the office. She tells about her past during the first private meeting with him. She is given to hysterical moods. Her moods change suddenly from hilarity to moroseness and irritability. She express pseudo- philosophical ideas about life such as 'Living Today and Letting Tomorrow Take Care of Itself'<sup>3</sup> Or Omar Khayyam's Philosophy of drinking the cup of life to its lees. She says that she is like a wind along he waste. It is immaterial for her what she has to undergo or how others may picture her if only her career is safe. It is

certainly not her love for Ramani, which drives her blindfold into such origies. It is her career consciousness.

She breaks every norm and moral principal in the pursuit of her economical independence. Each day Ramani loiters into her room after closing office. Like a mistress she hold him under her spell. This relationship goes on continuously without any interruption. She freely accompanies Ramani in the car even in the town. She goes to night show of the film in Malgudi theatre without any fear of society. They leave before the film ends because Shanta Bai feels bored. She enjoys moonlit nights of Saryu. Ramani's relationship with Shanta Bai creates disturbance in Savitri's domestic life. The extra-marital relationship exposes the duplicity of Ramani's character. He is democratic, tyrannical and selfish as a husband and submissive cajoling, persuasive and effacing as a lover.

The possible clash between the traditional and non-tradition styles of life is brought out through the anti-theatrical characters of Savitri and Shanta Bai. The unorthodox new ways of Shanta Bai impinge hard upon the stability and calm normalcy of the traditional domestic life style of Ramani and Savitri. A stormy commotion is created leading to the breakdown of family ties under the crippling jolt administered by the disruption of nuptial bond. The temporary dislocation thus caused passes away. Restoration is secured through reconciliation and resilience that Savitri learns after having gone through a series of experiences unknown to her so far. Savitri's character

shows that one may not be able to change the things as they are but one can definitely manage to live by learning the art of making compromises and accommodation.

In 'The Dark Room' the last but an important woman character is Ponni, a talkative and loving person. She is the wife of Mari, a blacksmith of Sukkur village. Sukkur village consists of about a hundred houses, few streets and big stretches of paddy fields. Ponni lives in a cottage, with an extension of a roof covering straw shed touching the crooked street, which served as his husband's workshop. She is a peasant woman who is frank, forthright, determined and practical-minded. She is also sensitive and understanding by nature. She not only helps Savitri but also respects her need for privacy. She is a very understanding person.

"Ponni's intimate response for her to Savitri, her care and affection her dealing with Ranganna, her command over the husband make her a sharp practical woman with a compassionate heart and an innocent disposition."<sup>4</sup>

She is bold enough in dealing of the people. She says to Mari leave them alone 'we can look after ourselves quite well without you.' She is glib of tongue and admits her temperamental candor before the priest of the temple saying,

"I will talk to my master. She asked to the old man,"  
Will you be offended if I talk to you? "

"Who are you ? Oh, you are . . . I Know. Why should  
I be offended ? Anybody may talk to me. I am a  
servant of God. I am an old man." Saying this made  
him lose the thread of his previous talk with Savitri.

Ponni said abruptly, "Master, I am like a  
granddaughter to you, and I will talk to you freely.

God has not blessed me with an artful tongue. I utter  
what I have in my soul."<sup>5</sup>

She is poor because her income from their traditional occupation of  
lock repairing is limited. She appears to be rough and barbarous by her  
language. She speaks abruptly to her husband at that time when she scolds  
him for his follies in front of others and holds him under her complete sway.  
She advises Savitri frankly that a husband has to be kept under tight control  
otherwise he is likely to go astray.

"Sister, remember this. Keep the men under the rod,  
and they will be all right. Show them that you care for  
them and they will tie you up and treat you like a  
dog."<sup>6</sup>

She believes that any husband may not be unmanageable in this  
world. She relates to her the event,

“ He is a splendid boy, but sometimes he goes out with bad friends, who forces him to drink, and then he will come home and try to break all the pots and beats me. But when I know that he has been drinking, the moment he comes home, I trip him up from behind and push him down, and sit on his back for a little while; he will wriggle a little, swear at me, and then sleep, and wake up in the morning quiet as a lamb.”<sup>7</sup>

She has her own methods of treating her husband. Mari is morally afraid of her. She tells him threateningly that he must go to the village in search of a job for Savitri when he tries to ignore Ponni's statement. She says,

“If she dies I will tell the police that you killed her; and they will believe it, be sure.”<sup>8</sup>

Ponni is helpful, caring, friendly and sympathetic to Savitri. She convinces her successfully to come to their house in the village. In spite of her financial problem, she offers fruits and coconut to her, as she knows that Savitri, being of an upper caste, will not take food cooked by her as she belongs to a lower caste. She can not see her in such a miserable condition but Savitri refuses to accept anything, which is not earned by herself. She goes to the priest for getting a job of a temple maid for her in the village

temple. She is intelligent enough to put the priest in his place too when he tries to deny his promise of giving job to Savitri. She knows very well that Savitri will be upset or depressed if her past is scrutinized –

“That is not the way, my master. Need not tell you, master, you are learned and wise where as I am a stupid women. You can see her, and take her in good trust and on our word, and if you find anything wrong, with her later, you can dismiss her. There are questions which hurt one, you mustn’t ask them.”<sup>9</sup>

When the priest asks awkward questions to Savitri, she is irritated and speaks sharply asking him not to embarrass the lady like this. The priest feels insulted at this. He rejects the idea of employing Savitri in the temple. Ponni, being practical-minded, understands how to deal with such a greedy man. She tells the priest in no uncertain terms that he should at once take back all the rubbish he has given to Mari for repairs or she will throw them away into the street. These bold words have their effect and the priest considers giving Savitri the job of cleaning and sweeping the village temple on half a measure of rice and a quarter of an anna per day. Ponni is very friendly to her. She attempts to coax Savitri to go back home. She is happy when Savitri decides to return home. She comes along to see her off. She also requests a cart-driver to for give her a lift to the town. She bids farewell her with message,

"Go with a cheerful face. Don't look so sad. Remember: men are good creatures, but you must never give way to them. Be firm and they will behave."<sup>10</sup>

She has a natural moral strength in her character. She is used to the difficult and odd situations, which are sign of her struggle. On the basis of her resilience and steadfastness, she is confident and determined in facing difficult situations. She protests when priest engages Savitri to do gardening. She says,

"You want her to do the work of four persons. You want her to do this and that endlessly in the temple; all right, we won't grumble about it. But what is this ? This is not the temple."<sup>11</sup>

She ranks above them all in moral qualities inspite of her low class in society, illiteracy and poverty. Right to say that 'adversity makes strange bed-fellow', relationship of sympathy, kindness and caring comes in to being between Ponni and Savitri, inspite of having big gap in their class and caste. Savitri in contrast to her lacks that sort if strength and confidence. There is no other women protagonist in the novel match with her in terms of sturdiness, confidence, and moral strength, management of situation of crisis.



Shanti is the major woman character in the novel Mr. Sampath. She is the model of the new Indian woman. She was born and grew up in Madras. She comes to Malgudi for making a career and to achieve an independent identity in the society. She has been the wife of a forest officer with whom she snaps off her ties because of some differences. She has a son whom she leaves under the supervision of others. Her past exhibits her modernity of thoughts which is in consistency with an open, bold, desirous and adventurous mental orientation of a new ideas and developments. She conveniently gets initiated into her role of a Parvati and gives best performance.

She is called for interview by Sampath, after audition test, she is selected for acting the part of heroine in the proposed film 'The Burning of Karma. She is a modern, ambitious lady who is not selected on the mercy of Mr. Sampath but on the strength of God –given attractive, enchanting beauty that is fit for her role as a Parvati. Srinivas describes her as,

“A very pretty girl, of a height which is neither too much nor too little, a perfect figure, rosy complexion, arched eyebrows, and almond- shaped eyes – everything that should send a man, especially an artist, into hysterics.<sup>12</sup>

Shanti is a dedicated to her work. She works hard in order to give better output as she can. She doggedly sticks to her determination of getting

through her assignment. Because she wants to take lightly any dialogue, this is the reason she is clear on every dialogue and situation in the story for the sake of playing her role perfectly. Whenever there is confusion, she likes to take advice from the scriptwriter, rather than going on incorrectly. It exhibits from her personal enquiry in regard to the manner of speaking a dialogue, 'How shall I get at him?' uttered by her to her maids. She wants to clear, how to speak this like a question or as a desperate cry. She does not lose her temper even when she is tired or asked for repeated rehearsals. On the other hand the hero playing the part of Shiva strictly protests, fights and runs away. All this reveals her dedication, devotion and diligence to her role as an actress. She has a close resemblance with the girl for whose single glimpse, Ravi is pinning so that he may be able to finalize her portrait. The film shooting ends in a big hysterical fiasco, the frenzied behaviour of Ravi.

The characters of Shanti of Mr. Sampath and Shanta Bai of The Dark Room are smart, bold, modern, ambitious and having new ideas for life. Both of them leave their home and husband, and come to Malgudi to make a career and independent economic identity in the society. During their professional life each develops carnal illegal relationships with her male colleague. The dissimilarity between the two are, in their dealing of work they are doing. Shanti is hard working and a devoted artist. On the contrary Shanta Bai is flippant in her work. She makes illicit relationship with Ramani, for a selfish purpose. She acts deliberately towards her boss and

ensnares him. She enjoys with him in office, cinema and some other public spot of Malgudi. In Shanti's character such preplanned tricks and amorous movements are missing. After interruption of the film by Ravi's frenzied behaviour. She accompanies with Sampath to the hill resort at the top of Mempi Hills in odd situations for recovering her mental and emotional normalcy. Moreover, Shanti considers marrying with him. But soon she turns up her mind and abandons the ideas of marriage and any relation with Sampath. She goes back to her old family life and takes charge of her maternal duty of caring for her only son. The note she leaves for Sampath at the station denotes the moral crisis in her. This is the maternal cause of her transformation. She

"I am sick of this kind of life and marriage frightens me. I want to go and look after my son, who is growing up with strangers. Please leave me alone, and don't look for me. I want to change my ways of living . . . I am, after all, a widow and can shave my head and disfigure myself, if I like. If it is the only way out I will go it. I had different ideas about film life."<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Shanta Bai does not undergo any such transformation.

Daisy belongs to a joint family with many brothers, sisters, uncles, sister-in-law, grand-aunts and cousins, having a big property of land, gardens and orchards. Daisy studies in a convent school and to reach there she has to

travel by a bus. When she was thirteen years old her parents decided to get her married. She has all revulsion against a married life so she refuses to get married. She runs away from her home forever. She studies and takes the training of Social work with the help of a missionary organization in Madras. She refuses baptism but without any objection changes her name to Daisy. In the beginning her life is full of struggle. She appears in Malgudi suddenly. She is faithfully dedicated to the advancement of Family planning norms. She tells about her mission to villagers and ignorant people in order to control enhanced growth of population. She sincerely performs her mission without anybody's support. She has put up a Family Planning Centre and deals it independently. She introduces with Raman in order to paint the signboards of her office for general information and a red triangle at a corner of the board as it is the symbol of family planning programme. She is ultimately modern in her attitude. She is never hesitant in discussion of family planning programme. She frankly tells Raman that she is expecting a women's delegation for discussion of how to avoid pregnancy. Daisy's impression on Raman renders his self-professed notions of manhood badly shaken. She thinks that marriage is mark of woman's slavery to man. So she is determined in her decision to live her life in her own style. Raman is astonished to see Daisy's independent dealing of all the work of her mission of birth control. William Walsh comments in regard to her aim,

“She carries a furnace of conviction within which burns up all ambiguities, doubts and qualifications.”<sup>14</sup>

Daisy's rationality logic about birth-control comes in contrast with the superstitious of the villagers. She advises through various lectures to the ignorant people to be more serious in use contraceptives.

“This journey through the villages gives Narayan plenty of opportunity to contrast Daisy's modernity and passionate pursuit of population control with the casual, self-indulgent, unhygienic ways of the villages, to contrast is brought to sharp intensity in the encounter Daisy has with the old priest in one village who has built a temple to the Goddess of plenty so that barren women could come and pray for three days and conceive within thirty. This antithesis of Daisy's mission touches Raman's sense of irony. The shastras declare that the more children in a home the more blessed it becomes. For anyone to tamper with this design of the goddess seems to the priest and his followers evil. There is enough of the Indian left in Daisy to be abashed by the priest, but not enough to undo her convictions.”<sup>15</sup>

Daisy's chance encounter with the old man who gives reference of the priest and says that a child is a gift of God; this cross-questioning in the presence of Raman irritates her. She does not talk to him for a long time and beats a hasty retreat to the local teachers house. Raman underscores her non-compromising or serious dealing of her mission. As,

"If she were a despotic queen of ancient days, she would have ordered the sawing off of the organs of generations."<sup>16</sup>

She is a woman of strong convictions and indomitable will and staunch determination. Her thoughts on marriage are unconventional. While at home she behaves in unconventional manner to cross –examines the guests on questions put to her. She speaks to her parents,

"Only a retreat from sun and rain, and for sleeping, washing, and depositing one's trunk. ... I had other aims, I said that I would like to work, rather than be a wife."<sup>17</sup>

She gives her consent to marry Raman on her own conditions. She tells him that she will live her life with her own style, and Raman will not have any right to make any enquires about her and if he will do so, she will leave him at the very moment.

". . . Daisy had laid down two conditions before accepting his approval. One, that they should have no

children, and two, if by mischance one was born she would give the child away and keep herself free to pursue her social work . . . ”<sup>18</sup>

She feels inconvenient to adjust herself in normal woman's life. When her husband goes to bring her home. She refuses to go with him.

“Married life is not for me. I have thought it over. It frightens me. I am not cut for the life you imagine. I can't live except. It won't work.”<sup>19</sup>

She rejects all the ideas of a comfortable life. As soon as, She realizes that she has some mission to carry out. She expresses her desire that her fulfillment is not in having 'a personal life' but in the performing of her mission. She is so hard, so cold and so stiff that Raman tries to follow her toughness in his own life. This novel focuses on the change in human nature with regard to thoughts and accepted values. She is modern, independent in spirit, self confident, determined, unsentimental, bold and economically independent. She exhibits the awareness of the modern Indian woman at the transitional stage of Indian society.

Bharti is an important female character in the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma*. She is self-dependent and bold, has a mind of her own and firmness to assert it. She has a fixed aim in life and no one can alter her from her path. She doesn't like to be supported by any man for her existence. She is totally different from traditional Indian girls. Narayan has portrayed her

character as a newly emerging woman of India. She works hard continuously without taking any rest. Sometimes, she used to go to one town to another town, talks to people and teach them how to spinning Charkha. Her father had died in 1920 movement and after her mother's death; she is adopted by local Sevak Sangh. She is a social worker and freedom fighter, independent in her thinking and attitude. Bharti is the true disciple and follower of Mahatma Gandhi's principles. Her first meeting with the hero of novel Sriram, occurs in market Fountain area when she was collecting the funds for freedom movement, at the time of Bapu's visit to Malgudi.

"As he approached the Market Fountain a pretty girl came up and stopped him. 'Your contribution?' she asked, shaking a sealed tin collecting box."<sup>20</sup>

Sriram is his Granny's lovable but careless grandson. He is a shy, submissive young man and his uneventful life takes a serious turn when his imagination, for the first time, is fired by a beautiful girl. He becomes an emotional captive in her hand and his throat 'went dry and no sound came' when he found his love before him. She is the queen of his heart. He finds her, as P.P. Mehta writes,

"Witty, infuriating, capable and wonder of wonders."<sup>21</sup>



She looks full of confidence standing with Mahatma Gandhi on the stage in the public meeting. Bharti, as a woman has carved out in Sriram the image of patriot.

“In marriage he is certain to find in her the saviour strength that is woman’s Sahkti.”<sup>22</sup>

Sriram was a lazy, day-dreaming and good for nothing short of a young man before introduction and association with Bharti. She introduces him into the world of new experiences. She corrects Sriram’s olden thoughts in a short time. She indulges in complaining about Sriram. She makes him aware of his drawbacks through biting comments. Bharti, the heroine of the novel, is not only an enchanting bird ‘gliding on wings’ to Sriram but is also ‘daughter of India’ who has something to do with Bapu. She becomes Sriram’s destination. He expresses his choice to be where Bharti is. Sriram’s personal love of Bharti and the patriotic love of Mother India seem intermixed in the novel that the author has coloured with an ironic vision nicely.

Gandhi’s famous Ramdhun echoed in the end of his speech with musical harmony that filtered into the soul of people directly and which was led by Bharti at a microphone but she happened to be Sriram’s dream girl who was clad in Sari of Khaddar with white home – spun. In earlier time he had distaste for Khaddar but now he realized that Khaddar could be the loveliest stuff. When Gandhi was away, he used to write letters to his

followers. In the novel, he does the same thing by writing a letter to Bharti and Sriram and instructing them to continue the work.

“Your work should be a matter of inner faith. It cannot depend upon what you see or understand. Your conscience should be your guide in every action.”<sup>23</sup>

He also instructs Sriram to look after Bharti as she looks after you as your political guru. But for Sriram it is a primary duty to look after his beloved. With the love of nation and as a worker of Gandhi, the love of Sriram also blossoms with the volcanic eruptions and he assaults her without any pre-meditation and astonishes her. He holds her in an iron embrace and gives her no opportunity to struggle or to free herself. He says to her ‘No one can stop me and you from marrying now. This is how Gods marry’ (P.89) She gently released herself from his hold and said, ‘Not yet. I must wait for Bapu’s sanction.’ She creates an emotional vacuum in Sriram’s life, which disturbs, worries and frustrates him. He is a helpless being because she has gone to jail at the call of Mahatma. The separation generates an emotional vagrancy in him. After returning from jail, the search for Bharti becomes intensive and maddening to Sriram. Ultimately, he receives her letter, which asks him to meet her in New Delhi at Birla House on 14<sup>th</sup> January. He rushes to Delhi only to meet Bharti. She is his destination, his peace and everything he craves for. But, Bharti is more sensible than Sriram as a follower of Gandhi. She cares some thirty children, sufferer of communal riots. Her

backbreaking tiring duty of caring these refugee children who have been brought from badly affected areas by communal riots between Hindus and Muslims at the time of India's partition. She is truly dedicated to the Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence. She gives first preference to work for the suffering and agonizing people. It is the mission of her life to obey Mahatma as a nationalist. When the whole nation was jubilant with Independence Day communal eruptions in Calcutta. She was worried to see man killing man, brothers butchering brothers, women being looted, marauded molested which made people homeless and without children. At the time of National Calamity, she continues her journey without taking any rest. She goes to Bihar and Noakhali with the risk of attack on her honour but she does not feel depressed.

After independence they sought the permission of the Mahatma to marry and settle down, as Bapu was Bharti's god father and Sriram's great guru. Bapu admired their proposal and expressed his desire, "I will be your priest, if you don't mind." (P.173) He patted Bharti's back and threw a smile at Sriram and opened his heart with blessings, which were 'always on you both'. (P.173). Bapu could not see them married. Unfortunately, he died of bullet injuries on the eve of their marriage while he was going for the evening prayer. The waiting of Sriram ends after marrying Bharti but the waiting for Mahatma still continues for Bharti and Sriram, the people of Malgudi and the entire people of India. The male protagonist, Sriram recedes

into the background in the presence of the female counterpart Bharti. She is not homebound, meek, subservient and helplessly suffering person. Her potentialities blossom into the stature of a social, political and moral leader before male protagonist. She guides him and dominates over him.

The Guide is Narayan's eighth novel. Rosie is the major female character in the novel. The story of the novel mainly revolves around the relationship of Rosie and Raju. Rosie's role is crucial to a proper understanding and analysis of the motives and forces that govern the complex human nature. Rosie belongs to a caste of temple dancers. She is well educated, having done M.A. in Economics. Her mother, who is a dancer, wishes her to live a life of social respectability. That is why; she is married to a gentleman scholar, much higher in status, wealth and intellect who lives in a big sprawling house in Madras. The marriage takes place in response to a matrimonial advertisement given by the latter.

"She breaks the family tradition to earn the ideal status of a married woman, but marriage and its imperative bindings and discipline have been unknown in her family, her subsequent life becomes a battle ground between her divided selves. She fails to reconcile the two situations."<sup>24</sup>

She is married to him for the sake of social prestige. She will take pleasure of her husband's high status irrespective of the consideration of

match or mismatch of the tastes and likings of the partners. All the women in the family were very happy and excited in the alliance, so Rosie's own like or dislike did not arise. Her name is Rosie but she is totally an Indian who wears Indian dress like a sari and has long hair. Raju tells about Rosie's outlook to the Velan in these words,

"Don't imagine on hearing her name that she wore a short shirt or cropped her hair. She looked just the orthodox dancer she was. She wore saris of bright hues and gold lace, had curly hair which she braided and be- flowered, wore diamond ear rings and a heavy gold necklace."<sup>25</sup>

Rosie's personality is not so glamorous but she leaves a lasting impression on people's mind. Raju, at the very first sight of her feels self-conscious while she is descending from the railway compartment. He explains her personality,

"She was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made her one half visible – as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice."<sup>26</sup>

Rosie's husband Marco is dedicated to his pursuit of deciphering ancient art, caves and temples to the point of total ignoring of his wife's desires and interests. He plans to compose a book on this topic. He is disregarding towards his wife's interests. He prefers isolation where he can workout on his study with full concentration and undisturbed by any one, even his wife also. Marco and his wife Rosie's interests and likings are totally mismatched with each other. She has an undying love for dance. She gets satisfaction in practicing dance because she has burning yearning for her art. But Marco hates dance and calls it 'street acrobatics' or showing mere superficiality of one's nature. When she asks Raju to show her a king cobra's dance to the tune of a flute, Marco comments, 'Your interests are morbid.' Her love for dance gets her closer to Raju and away from Marco. She feels bored with him, as he is mostly engrossed in writing or deciphering paintings and carvings on the walls of caves and temples. These things are more important to him than the women of flesh and blood. She despises his deep interest in lifeless stones. She makes an oblique explanation to Marco's hobby when Raju asks about her own interest. She replies that her interest lies in everything except old stone walls. They often quarrel because of dissimilarity of interests. That is why Rosie's life becomes unhappy.

"When we are alone and start talking, we argue and quarrel over everything. We don't agree on most

matters, and then he leaves me alone and comes back  
and we are all right, that's all."<sup>27</sup>

Rosie is devoted to Marco inspite of his impotence and prickliness. She tries her best to become a good housewife. Probably she tries too hard, 'no, let me serve you both, and I will be the last to eat, like a good housewife' but Rosie falls a victim to the cleaver maneuverings of Raju. The incident that leads to the unfortunate break of wife – husband relationship between Rosie and Raju. Marco is more responsible for this misfortune. The impenetrable self-confinement and lack of adaptability on his part despite his wife's unconditional, actual regret are mainly blame for this situation. One more reason is there why Rosie gives in to Raju is:

"Her innate desire to reaffirm her faith in herself: in short, to be an individual. She relates to Raju on this plane simply because of the fact that he is perhaps the first man in her life who has complimented her on her talents as a dancer....."<sup>28</sup>

He is fully absorbed in his work day in and day out. Rosie's staying away from her husband, coupled with her dissatisfaction in her married life comes handy to crooked Raju. She is attracted towards him irresistibly as he deftly plays upon her desire to become a dancer. He promises that he will make her 'a queen of the world.' Such blandishments win her to his side. Raju is a romantic admirer of Rosie's dance and a genuine sympathizer in

her tragic alienation from her husband who is a variation on the character of Ramani of 'The Dark Room.' Raju took care to appreciate her dance and paid personal attention to cheer her drooping spirit. One day on her visit to the Peak House, under emotional stress, she accepts her extra-marital relationship with Raju. The break of nuptial trust or responsibility results in the destruction of their husband-wife relationship. He dispenses with the services of Raju and stops talking to Rosie. Whenever she tries to help him, he checks her. He does not forgive her. After a month, when he has finished his work, Marco leaves for Madras, leaving her stranded in Malgudi, telling her that he has only one ticket for himself and instructs the porter to remove Rosie's bags from the compartment. Under these circumstances, Rosie has no alternative but to go to Raju's house. She starts her career as a dancer under the new name Nalini. Rosie is a genuine artist. She is sincerely devoted to dance rehearsals starting at five early in the morning and ends at eight, then she studies ancient works of art like Natya Shatra for two hours. She resumes her assiduous practice at Raju's house. Ultimately She ranks very high as a champion of Bharat Natyam and gains name, fame and wealth. She stages dance performances in different parts of India. Her engagements are fixed three months in advance. Raju's dream of a luxurious life and Rosie's to be a classical Bharat Natyam dancer comes true. She is hoping to be an accomplished dancer because she is educated, confident and talented. She wants to bring her talent to its full fruition. In the beginning



she wants to develop this talent in the homely atmosphere of her husband's home and subsequently in the old house of Raju. Rosie's amorous entanglement with Raju is more a consequence of circumstances than any intentional tendencies. Being frustrated she is easily influenced by Raju's provocation. She expresses her tiredness and boredom with the life of public performance. When Raju speaks abruptly that it's your own choice to become a dancer. She says, "I visualized it as something different. It is all gone with that old house of yours." (P.221). But Raju would not listen to her protest and continued to book more and more engagements.

Rosie's forte, of her remarkable potentiality for adaptability with odd situations is discernable at various places. She regrets before her husband for her past mistake in having illicit relations with Raju. She feels that she has 'committed an enormous sin' to disobey her husband's desires. She assures Marco that she will not give him a chance to complain in future. She also promises to give up her ambition of dancing forever. She was half inclined even to go back to Marco and apologize for her decision to launch upon her dancing career against his wishes. She faces bravely all the adverse situations after her separation from Marco. Her struggle for achieving her goal and then Raju's arrest on charge of forgery of her signatures on a legal document hurt her very deeply. Still she survives, and assures Raju that she will try her best to get relief in the case. She proves it by selling her diamonds and shares. She also manages her performance independently to

pay the lawyer's fee. But she fails and he is sentenced for two years in jail. She says:

"It does not mean I'm not going to help. If I have to pawn my last possessions, I'll do it to save you from jail. But once it's over, leave me once and for all; that's all I ask. Forget me. Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that's all."<sup>29</sup>

After the court's decision she settles in Madras and performs in stage shows in different parts of India. Thus, she succeeds in surviving the ups and downs of her life on the inherent strength of her resilience and adjustability. Rosie is the symbol of age-old conflict between old and new. She belongs to the category of more modern women of R.K. Narayan novels, unlike the conventional, orthodox, submissive, helpless and homely women of earlier novels. She listens to her instinct, fulfills her ambition and achieves successes as a dancer.

Sarsa is the most domineering woman in the novel *Talkative Man*. She is born and brought up at Madras and educated at St. Evans in Egmore in the same city. Her early life is very simple. She belongs to a traditional family. She is introduced with Rann, when he is supplying them home magazines. Besides film magazines, he will supply some serious magazines also like the *National Geographic* to improve her mind and knowledge. These intellectual discussions lead to the inevitable result of their closeness.

His original name is Rangan. She is liberally entertained by a delivery boy of circulating library. She is highly influenced by his knowledge of various subjects. Her marriage with Rann is not a conventionally arranged one. She elopes with Rann when her parents have gone to Avadi. Her marriage tallies the western pattern of finalizing the matrimonial knot. She describes her marriage ceremony, which is performed in a simple way.

“A priest had lit oil lamps all around the image of some god. He presided over the exchange of garlands, asked us to prostrate before the god, lit a heap of camphor, got a couple of his friends to witness, in addition to God, distributed fruits to the gathering, lit a little flame we circled, and sounded a bell. He then gave the bridegroom a yellow thread, and told him to tie it around my neck, charged us fifty rupees for his service, issued a rubber-stamped, receipt and we were husband and wife.”<sup>30</sup>

Their early-married life was very joyful. In spite of Rann's good position and not having any financial problem, she works in a travel agency as a receptionist. Both of them leave for their job at nine. But soon their happy married life becomes hellish. On his coming back from Avadi, her father is furious to find her missing. The maid-servant, in self defense tells him that her daughter has been kidnapped by two young men in a car. Rann

is charged with kidnapping an immature girl and her wife Sarsa is brought back home and under the pressure of their family she sign an affidavit that she had been kidnapped.

“This was the most painful part of the whole drama and I could never forgive myself for doing it. Signing a long story based on the old lady’s report. How I had been snatched up from our house when I stepped out to get a couple of bananas from the shop across the street.”<sup>31</sup>

But on the basis of Sarasa’s birth record, court acquits him and declares them duly married. But all this happenings leaves an indelible feeling of bitterness in his mind. He becomes hardened by his nature and one day this married life suddenly ends. When he does not return home one evening.

She is modern, educated, independent physically tough and more assertive than the male protagonists of the novel. Temperamentally, she is built to command everyone who comes in her way. All these characteristics of her personality are grown in her by her position as Commandant of Home Guards Women’s Auxiliary. She arrives at the Malgudi by 7 down train from Delhi and takes shelter in the waiting room. The station master informs the TM that a lady who come by 7 down is not ready to leave the waiting room just like that London man whom TM had to take away. Her imposing

appearance is very surprising to the station master. The talkative man too is impressed by her personality, he says,

“Well an impressive personality, slightly dark, but a commanding personality, rather a large build, I should say. Perhaps exaggerated by the blue jeans and T-shirt and bobbed hair. The Station Master was quite cowed down by her manner and opened the Waiting Room promptly . . .”<sup>32</sup>

Her dress and her frankness in introducing herself to TM as Dr. Rann's wife out of his possibly several wives, she is 'the only one regularly married and the first' makes him rather feel stunned. A photograph of the 'Timbuctoo man' in her hand she asks authoritatively from the TM. He also feels a little cowed down in her presence and tries to escape from this matter. She has an uncanny and practical mind, which makes her see through the false game that the journalist has played upon her. However, she is careful as much as necessary not to show off her doubt about his indefinite answer. On his coming back, TM tells Dr. Rann he has gone to railway station to post his evening dispatch. The station master tells me that there is "a lady to see you." Dr. Rann's previous posture of arrogant and overbearing looks punctured only by the mere mention of this lady.

She is ceaseless in her activities. One afternoon she reaches suddenly at TM's house in Kabir Street. Fortunately, Dr. Rann who is taking shelter in

his house is away at that time. Her commanding personality, outlandish manners her body language, confidence, boldness and modernity are so unusual for the people of Kabir Street who are conventional, peculiarly localized in dress and manner residing in that part of Malgudi for a long period. Sarsa's non-traditional extra ordinary personality is delineated as:

"She looked like Punjabi women, in her Kurta or Salwar Kameez, or whatever they call it, which seems to exaggerate her physical stature, which was already immense. In our street where women were used to glittering silk sarees, gold and diamond, she looked like a visitor from another planet. She wore around her neck white beads in a string, looked like a gypsy, and had around her shoulder a pink muslin wrap- the total effect was startling really. No. wonder the spruce tailor-dummy called Rann quailed at the very thought of her."<sup>33</sup>

She is so frank and talkative that even TM feels defeated before her inspite of his habitual chatting with the people of Malgudi. She describes Rann as a crook, a woman killer, ravishing them and deserted them through out the world. The masculine resilience in her character is manifested by her iron will or determination to pursue her vagabond husband to any nook and corner of the globe. On account of the burden of official duties, she remains

calm and acts smartly if any hint is given to her about Rann. She is fully armed with a pistol, being an officer in the Home Guards at Delhi. Only some times does she give in to her womanly instincts or accepts helplessness.

“The waiting room must have been a dungeon at one time where prisoners were cooped up. I’d not want even my worse enemy to come in there. This tree is my shelter all through the day. I watch the travelers come and go and would willingly sleep under it during the night, but for my sex – still the world is not an easy or safe place for us.”<sup>34</sup>

She starts sobbing upon being reminded of her husband, but except for this she dominates the scene. She ordered the station master about and commanded the porter unreservedly until they supply her needs. She is clever, observant and has empirical perceptive power. She knows how to deal or adjust to her surroundings. She manages to stay in the waiting rooms for days together by the application of her common sense. Where Dr. Rann had problem with the station master to stay in the waiting room a day longer. She gratifies the station master by giving him a five –rupee note per day, he also arranges to send her some food from his house and even got a spray pump to get rid of bed bug. She also gives two rupee note to the porter. In this way, she develops personal relations with the station master’s family

and the porter. They are sentimental at the time of her farewell. She succeeds in roping in Dr. Rann on account of her courage, iron -will, patience and confidence to struggle against the heavy odds and adversities of life. After their coming back to Delhi, they live together. She was very happy to find him. Sarasa is totally a different personality who believes and follows the conventional norms of loyalty in wedlock despite her husband's known insincerity or duplicity. In view of human characteristic Sarasa is much above all this 'Callous and indiscriminate lecher'. The devastating incident takes place again when Sarasa has to go to Jaipur on some assignment for 3 days. After returning from the official trip the cook informs her that her husband has gone away with a nurse named Komal from Matildas. She breaks down and sobs bitterly before TM on another visit to Malgudi, expecting that Rann may be there. Now she has great antipathy with him and prays to God that one-day he might be arrested for all his hypocrisy, may be for his passport frauds, and made to spend his life in jail. As author says in his postscript to the novel:

"Prison life will have shorn him of his Adolphe Menjou style and three-piece suit, and no woman will even give him a glance, and he will have no where to go. At that point he will think of me, but he wont find me."<sup>35</sup>



Sarasa is delineated as woman with exceptional drive, energy and dominance. Daisy of 'The Pinter of Signs' comes closer to her an extent. In contrast to Sarasa other female protagonists of Narayan seems submissive and brittle.

Narayan's characters are predominantly men. Thus he assigns a secondary role to women in his novels. But Bharti of *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Rosie of *The Guide* outshine their male counterparts, and create a place for themselves. All the other characters of his novels are traditional in outlook. Shanti of *Mr. Sampath* is bold and courageous in the beginning but she too retreats into traditionalism in the end. She even threatens to shave off her head, like a traditional widow. Bharti and Rosie are bold assertive, educated, have no problem in conversing with men. But where Bharti is all engrossed in her work, she is also confused with her feelings for Sriram. Similarly Rosie abandons herself to Raju's love making but feels guilty about it later. She can not decide whether the pursuit of individual happiness is correct or to be a traditionalist and to follow one's husband is correct. The great paradox of her life is that she is sandwiched between the prolific temptations of the advancing present and the omnipotence of custom. Infact Bharti and Rosie, signify the transition.

The place of woman in Indian family as also in political life has been backward. Woman has been presented either as the embodiment of endurance, understanding and sacrifice or being immune to a large extent to

the cultural impact of the west, as custodian of Indian culture. It is her virtue that counts, not her beauty. Therefore the highest aim of an Indian woman has been to sacrifice for her lawful husband her flesh and personal ambitions. Stoic sufferings of the heroine have been lauded time and again and vice, guile, selfishness and characterlessness have invariably been associated with all those women who are independent, aware of their youth and beauty and seek to realize personal ambitions like Shanta Bai of *The Dark Room*, Shanti of *Mr. Sampath* and Rosie of *The Guide*. These women are neither orthodox nor deeply rooted in culture but struggling to forge a new future in the wake of technological advancements. Indian life even today is by and large guided by traditional values of the joint family system where the rights and duties of each member are sharply defined. Intercaste and international marriages are viewed with suspicion not so much on ethological grounds as on grounds of cultural differences.

## Notes

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2. Ibid., P. 67
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5. R.K. Narayan: The Dark Room (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 2000) P. 174
6. Ibid., P. 136
7. Ibid., P. 136-137
8. Ibid., P. 159
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22. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar: Indian Writing In English: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973) P. 373
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25. R.K. Narayan: The Guide (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1991) P. 9
26. Ibid., P. 65
27. Ibid., P. 93
28. Atmaram: Perspective on R.K. Narayan (New Delhi: Bharat Prakashan, 1981) P. 145
29. The Guide P. 222
30. R.K. Narayan: Talkative Man (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1990, P. 65
31. Ibid., P. 69
32. Ibid., P. 60
33. Ibid., P. 64

34. Ibid., P. 59

35. R.K. Narayan, Talkative Man, P. 4 – postscript

# **Chapter – 5**

## **A Step Towards Feminism**

For centuries, women in India have been deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and ancient socio-cultural practices. At the advent of independence, women were prey to many abhorrent customs, traditional rigidities and vices due to which their status in the society touched its nadir. To be sure, the situation of women was bleak all-round. At the personal-social plane, women were victims of widespread illiteracy, feeble-health, segregation in the dark and dingy rooms in the name of purdah, enforced marriage before marriageable age, indeterminable widowhood, rigidity of fidelity and opposition to remarriage of widows turning many of them into matrimony to a system of shameful traffic, putting to death to female children, violence used to make women follow sati, commercialized marriage through dowry, and, above all, the complete denial of individuality. At the economic-structural plane, the women were prey to economic dependence, early tutelage of husbands, and in-laws, heavy domestic workload and invisible 'unpaid' and unrecognized work, absence of career and mobility, non-recognition of their economic contribution, poor work conditions and wages, and monotonous jobs which men refused to do. At the socio-political plane, women suffered from the denial of freedom even in their own homes, repression in some direction and unnatural indoctrination in others, unequal and inferior status everywhere, rigid caste hierarchy and untouchability. Most were reduced to 'dumb driven cattle' and led an inhumane, beastly life.

In one of the Vedic literatures, the Satpatha Brahmin, there are several derogatory observations against woman. She was regarded as intellectually inferior to man. She was characterized as more emotional and less rational by nature than man. She was described as one falling prey to external appearances and lacking ability to balance her mind and appreciate truth. She was said to be wanting in depth of reason. It was shown that the fair sex was more sensitive to the expressions of fine arts. The early customs of exaggeration of chastity and wifely fidelity gave rise to a number of problems for women in later days. Divorce and remarriage of widows widow-burning became social rule. Marriage of girls before puberty became common in the society to ensure the fidelity and legitimacy of heirs.

The seeds of uselessness of daughters and usefulness of sons were shown during the Vedic period. Sons came to be viewed as essential to performing sacrifices to the family ancestors and daughters came to be considered of no use for this function since they left their families to enter the families of their husbands. Woman's function was reduced to producing sons and restrictions were placed on female behaviour to ensure the legitimacy of sons. Only through giving birth to a son did a woman redeem herself in this patriarchal system. A sonless woman, even if she has daughters, had no value for the family. The sonlessness of a woman was in a way a licence for her husband to remarry. In this period the woman was allotted the domestic sphere of life and was subordinate to man in the



partriarchal familial system. She was looked down as inferior to man in intelligence.

In the post-Vedic period, the situation of woman became worst. In the Smriti-period, she was, in rhetoric, considered worthy for worship, but, in practice, denied even her individuality. She was put under the tutelage of the father, son and husband as the case may be, and was not considered worthy of independence even in her own home. The privilege of studying Veda and performing the sacred ceremonies came to be reserved only for Brahmin males. Women were forced to remain ignorant and illiterate. Sons came to be considered essential to performing sacrifices to the family ancestors; daughters stood nowhere in the picture. The function of women came to be considered polluted and untouchable during the periods of her men-striation, confinement, and child-bearing. Unless a woman was able to produce a son in the patriarchal system, she had no value. Thus, the Vedic attitude towards women underwent change in the post-Vedic period that was antagonistic to her.

According to Altekar,

“Thus, for nearly 2000 years from 20 B.C. to 1800 A.D., the position of women steadily deteriorated though she was fondled by the parents, loved by the husband and revered by her children. The revival of sati, the prohibition of remarriage, the spread of

purdah and the greater prevalence of polygamy made her position very bad.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Sutra period (600-300 B.C.), the scope of the activities of a wife in the religious field was restricted. Wife was not independence with respect to the fulfillment of the sacred law. Strict discipline in life and fidelity to her husband were demanded from a woman:

“Let her not violate her duty towards her husband, and let her restrain her tongue, eyes and actions.”<sup>2</sup>

By the time of Manusmriti (200 B.C.- A.D.100), the ideal of wifehood in essence was the negation of her personality. The husband must constantly be worshipped as a god by a faithful wife (Sadhvi), even if he be a destitute of character or seeking pleasures elsewhere or devoid of good qualities. A good wife desirous of living in this as well as the next world with her husband must never do anything that would displease him, either alive or dead. A woman attains paradise not by virtue of any austere penance but as a result of her obedience and devotion to her husband. To serve and worship their husbands with respect and obedience is their only duty. By the fulfillment of that duty alone they succeed in attaining heaven. Manu is not prepared to allow any kind of independent activity to women without consultation or permission of the male members of the family. She is subject to the guardianship of the father during her childhood, of her husband during youth, and of her sons after the death of her husband. She is not allowed to

do anything independently even in her own home. Manu assigns the low status to woman and downgrades her to the extreme. Manu is not ashamed in saying that women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling they may appear to be; for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on both the families. Considering it the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands must strive to guard their wives.

The preceding account of the status of woman in the Smiriti period indicates that by the passage of time her status deteriorated. She was allotted the domestic sphere of life. Her independence was snatched. She cast on her character. Her position was inferior even to the man weak in character. The son of any description was higher in status in comparison to daughter. A woman was described by a multitude of derogatory attributes. She was called fickle minded, sensual, seducer of men, given to falsehood, trickery, greed, impurity, and thoughtless action, root of evil, inconsistent and cruel. For her the sacrament was marriage. She was clubbed with Shudra and preordained to a low station in life. Under the impact of images created and sustained women are regarded, on the one hand as the embodiment of purity and spiritual power, on the other, they are viewed as essentially weak and dependent creatures requiring constant tutelage and guardianship of men.

The position of woman was different in Buddhism which appeared in the sixth century B.C. Polygamy is allowed in the Buddhist law. A man can marry a second time during the lifetime of the first wife. But a woman has no

similar choice. Wives of inferior status, such as concubines, have a legal status and can inherit property of their husbands. This helped avoid illegitimacy of children. The grounds for divorce are incurable diseases, such as leprosy. Women occupied a status lower than that of man in both domestic as well as monastic life. As is evident from the foregoing citation, woman was rated lower everywhere.

The Bhakti movement did bring the message of love and equality for women and Shudras, but it was lost with the rise of asceticism. The status of women received a serious set-back due to Saints attitude towards them. Some saints came to regard women as an object of material pleasure. Maya, while others thought them a barrier in the path of liberation. Whatever achievement was, it was within the traditional fold. So there could be no redemption of women.

At the advent of the British rule, women had already fallen prey to many abhorrent customs. The condition of women at the time of India came under the British rule was very shocking. As Shastri states :

“The enforced child- marriages; the exposure of the female children by throwing them at the junction of the Ganges and sea, the violence used to make women follow the Sati rule and, thus, end their miserable existence, the shameful treatment according to a widow the famous kulinism which made marriage a profession

rather than a sacrament, made woman not only an object of pity but many a woman sighed in the secret recess of her heart and wished that she had never been born a woman in the unfortunate country.”<sup>3</sup>

Altekar observes:

“Denied the benefits of education, brought up in the authoritarian atmosphere, having no opportunities to develop their natural capacities, women became helpless, illiterate, narrow minded and peevish ...the theory of perpetual tutelage of women became more and more deep rooted in society.”<sup>4</sup>

In this period woman became totally dependent on men :

“The present woman is an atrophied limb of the social organism and specially in civilized society she depends as completely for her support and sustenance on the husband as a child does on its mother.”<sup>5</sup>

In Christianity, the myth of creation which says that Eve was created after Adam to act as his companion and help-mate, accords a second place to woman in domestic and social life. She has to be subordinate first to her father and then to her husband. The mythic image of Eve as one who tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit from the Eden Garden has put a permanent stamp on woman as a temptress and seducer and has given the

husband right to control wife. When India was colonised by the British, their philosophy had deep impact over converted against the slavery of home and were confined to less prestigious jobs.

The modern woman did not restrict her life to the home and depend on men to make important decisions about the world, but played a dynamic role. Elaborating the meaning of 'roots', Sarojini appealed to the Vedas and the ancient epics. In her wisdom, a woman should be like 'Lakshmi', the river of happiness and prosperity; Saraswati, the embodiment of wisdom and learning; and Parvati, the eternal mother who uplifts the fallen, purifies the sinner, gives hope to the despairing, strength to the weak and courage to the coward and recreate in man the divine energy.

These, then, are the ways in which the womankind was characterized and judged in India. The portraits of women in the Hindu India is paradoxical and sometimes contradictory. She is a Devi (Goddess) as well as pramada (seducer). She is sincere and truth-loving as well as weak in character and poor in judgment. She is the queen of the house and yet not worthy for freedom in her own house. As opposed to this, others are of the view that women have been elevated in rhetoric, but crushed, in fact. And, it is because of this that women have, for too long, been made victim of men's tyrannical cruelties and injustices. These conditions of women tended to encourage the polarization of the outlook.

In pre-independent India, two major forces, among others, which acted, as catalyst in creating awareness and hopes among women were nationalist movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Not only that women swept in the high tide of the struggle but they also launched a separate movement of their own to fight for their rights. They broke their own age-old shackles. They fought orthodoxy, superstition and communal separation. They proved themselves of extraordinary capacities and projected a free, strong and courageous image of Indian womanhood.

“Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he ....By seer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have.”<sup>6</sup>

The women's question in post-independent era is no longer confined to her position within the family or their rights to equality with men in different aspects of social life. It is part of the total, far broader, question regarding the direction of change that our society is taking. Education has been identified as the major instrument for raising the status of women. Hence, with the acceptance of gender equality, access to education for

women at par with men was accepted. And, the rapid strides in education during the last forty years have affected women in the number of ways. It has created awareness among women and enabled them to be self-reliant. It has brought women in contact with the philosophy of liberalism and the democratic traditions of the West.

The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position which, in turn, depends upon rights, roles and opportunities for their participation in economic activities. Savitri revolts but she comes back home, as she has no alternative. In contrast to Daisy of *The Painter of Signs* who has an alternative and emerges as the Indian different from Savitri. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development. As we see Rosie's status in *The Guide*. In, *The Dark Room*, Savitri was helpless so accepts all the condition of the priest.

Women are primarily associated with the home and man with the outside world. The home-makers women look after domestic chores. Women's contributions go unrecognized, invisible and unpaid. Housewives and mothers are the feminine roles. In the cultural understanding, child-bearing and rearing cannot be distinguished from femininity. The quantum of labour put in by women is devalued. This division of labour leads to the seclusion and segregation of women. The political rights granted to women have helped build an illusion of equality and power, which is used against women trying to achieve their just and equal position in society.



It is a well-known fact that despite stray occasional glorification of women in Hindu scriptures, woman occupied a low status in the conventional society. In *The Bride's Book of Beauty* Mulk Raj Anand throw some light on the position of woman in India through the ages:

“Obviously, woman in India has sometimes been exalted as a goddess, but mostly pampered as a doll or kept down and oppressed.”<sup>7</sup>

For the purpose of highlighting the changing position of woman in India- the Indian social history may be reviewed briefly in three broad stages. The first stage covers the Ancient period including the Vedic and the post -Vedic or the Epic Times. The Medieval period, which marks the second stage, encompasses the centuries of Muslim rules in India. The third stage, usually known as the modern period, begins with the establishment of the British power in India and covers the years of Indian history up to the present. Both in the East and the West women occupied a hopelessly low and secondary status in the traditional society but, as Mulk Raj Anand says,

“ . . . the European woman . . . began to react against the low status that came to be assigned to her after Luther by the formulation of an ideal of woman as the equal of man, complete by herself, mistress of her own sex and free to use it as she likes, to accept or refuse motherhood

However throughout the main part of the nineteenth century in Britain the great majorities of women were content with a subordinate place in the home and in society, though a few writers had protested against that state of inequality. Towards the end of the century numerous women were expressing in various ways their discontent with an inferior status and were agitating for equality with men. This unrest became known as 'the Woman Question' and any woman who declared her right to be given an independent place in the community was called a 'New Woman'. The unrest finally took the shape of Women's Liberation Movement and gave birth to feminist groups and influenced various areas of life including literature. It is a part of the general changing ethos of the Indian society in transition. For one thing, the process of modernization which was set in motion by the East-West encounter at the intellectual and social level has given a new orientation to the Sati -Savitri tradition of the Indian womanhood. While writers like Raja Rao are not tired of extolling the traditional virtues of ritual women in pre-Independence India and have hereby projected the conservative and tradition-bound status of women, there has been a definite, though slow, change sweeping the status, role, attitude of Indian women for a different reason. Although R.K. Narayan is not a social critic, reformer or for that matter, a feminist yet it is this changing position of women in India that he has fictionally portrayed and captured faithfully in his novels as part of his fictional strategy of microcosmic device and realism. It is not without

significance that the inauguration of Narayan's novelistic career and the debate about the position of women or the 'Women Question coincided in the early thirties of the present century in India.

The popularity of his male protagonists enjoy constitutes a short phase, unreal like dreams. The downfall of the male protagonists is always a because of a minor incident. Ravi's efforts to kidnap the Shanti leads Sampath's professional to the miserable end. As in *The Guide* Raju is imprisoned because of forging Rosie's signature, thus closing the chapter of his glorious days of lover and impresarios. The heel of fortune is as irrational in Malgudi as anywhere, the characters look like puppets in the hands of fate.

Indian life is mostly guided by deep-rooted traditions and conventions. In the wake of the fight for freedom and the impact of the west on the Indian mind, gradually changes took place in attitude as well as ideology. Such social evils as the purdah system, casteism, sati, early marriage, widowhood etc. were discarded and new social values accepted, although not without clashes and conflicts. Narayan's portrayal of women in these novels is true of the times that is, the thirties of the present century in India, when family being the nucleus of traditional life, women were a source of order and unity in it. *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher* clearly highlight the all important role of family and that of woman in it. Compared with men, they have a subordinate position in the family and

society but they are custodians of time-honoured values and tradition. Chandran's mother in the Bachelor of Arts dominates both the father and the son when it is a question of family matter and large social conventions and traditions.

As mythology says, and history records, that man due to his physical superiority made woman his slave. He ruled her mind and body, tied her up in chains and restricted her freedom. All Indian mythology from the story of Sita to Savitri show women's secondary place. It seems she exists for the man wedded to her. On top of this she is applauded and praised for her behavior. So that such behavior has become the ideal role for woman. History has repeated these stories time and again resulting in a woman whose psyche is totally dependent upon such stories. Raju's mother in The Guide is one such person. 'She quoted numerous mythological stories of Savitri, Sita and all the well-known heroines.' According to her,

"Whatever sort of a husband one may have-It was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience, that brought him round."

Thus for these women, adherence to valued traditions is a matter of life and death. They are intrinsically governed and guided in their day-to-day observances by high ideals and the acquired lore of the past. If Rosie had followed her statement, she would not have become independent but indeed she would have become another Savitri.

The analysis of the status of women in India of yesterday revealed interesting trends. Right from Vedic days down to the modern times the woman was part of the patriarchal family system where she has to yield to the supremacy of man. And, within limits and limitations of the patriarchal society, women saw their best and worst days. The Vedic Period is said to be the most honoured days of women where they distinguished themselves in learning, possesses and inherited property, participated in assemblies and occupied central place in the domestic domain. However, even the women who excelled in intellectual and spiritual spheres were considered lower to their men counterparts. It is also not sure whether all women enjoyed the same rights and privileges.

It appears that the position of women steadily deteriorated. Ideologically, the woman was considered a completely inferior species, inferior to the male. Individually she has no personality; socially she was kept in utter subjection; morally, she was considered lacking the ethical fibre; economically; she was treated not worthy to have right to property; politically, she was excluded from the power positions. There surfaced four types of feminine ideals in India: as harmony of male and female, as mother ; as religious figure; and as wife. In practice, only two mundane roles are there for women; the role of wife and the role of the mother. Other two ideas cement these roles. At the advent of independence, women in India were prey to many abhorrent customs and vices due to which their overall

situation was bleak. They suffered from personal, social, economic-structural and socio-political constraints.

The pith and marrow of women's movement, which surfaced during struggle for independence, suddenly subdued after independence. But independence brought the promise of actual liberation for women. Tremendous changes were evident in the status of women. The constitution of India brought women on par with men in terms of equality, liberty and justice. Special provisions were made for the uplift of women and all discriminations flowing from sex were removed. During the past four decades of India's independence, much has been done towards liberation of women. However, there is a mixed record of achievements and failures. On the socio-demographic plane, the proportion of the women in population, which has been decreasing for long, has shown signs of increase in 1981. The mortality rate, though substantially lowered, is greater among women than men. The life expectancy at birth, which has been low for females as compared to males, has shown some encouraging signs of a somewhat higher expectation of life for females. On the legal front, series of laws, general and special were enacted for the advancement of women in order to ensure rights and privileges at par with men to eliminate discrimination against women, abolish inequality between the sexes, and lower the external barriers coming in the way of their development and self-realization. Several radical changes have taken place, which were impossible for centuries.

However, there is a large gap between the enactment of law and its actual implementation in a rigid social structure. Despite laws, women still continue to live under the domination of men and bear cruelties of all kinds. On the economic front, the scope of women's career has expanded during this period. However, all developments have not resulted in improving and widening, the field of women's economic activities. Most spectacular increase in employment is witnessed in the middle class women. The largest participation of women in the labour force is in the unorganized sector where they are ready to accept any form of employment however arduous and whatever the wages. On political scene also, women's participation has increased. Women contested elections to the legislative bodies at the center and in states and carried out the administrative responsibilities with marked success. But such political participation is limited to a tiny minority of women. Looking at the population of the women, they have certainly not flooded the portals of power and politics. In fact, there is a collective exclusion of women from power from local to the national levels. On socio-cultural plane, various changes have taken place in traditional values and customs. But religion, family and kinship obligations, and cultural norms continue to delimit the scope of women's activities and block their full and equal participation in society. Women suffer from special problems, such as rape, prostitution, and suicide. This is obvious, then that women continue to suffer from inequality of class, status and power.

The scanning of the status of women in India, as it evolved through centuries is indeed revealing in many ways. It is evident now that many areas of women's concerns remain invisible due to andocentric bias. Women have been confined to the private sphere of life; men preserving the public sphere for themselves. Discriminations against women are very wide. The development that occurred has had adverse impact on women in many ways.

The liberation of women lies in liberation from all the roles associated with male dominance and conscious creation of new roles by and for the women. Full equality and free access to all types of development, all types of education, all types of employment can not be achieved within the existing social structure and, therefore, there is a pressing need of significant structural changes. Men must share equally with women the responsibilities of home making and child rearing and women must seek career outside the home like men. The liberation of women entails a fight against both men and the social system that keep women in subordinate position. The basic-needs strategy's concept at the micro level, which treats women as critical category and the capital accumulation model of development which holds that the process of capital accumulation and women's exploitation in society need be relied upon.

Daisy's refusal to fill the role of the conventional Hindu house-wife, her passion for social work and her changing moods – smiling mood and non-smiling one, talking mood and silent one, caressing and non-caressing –



raise expectations, in M.K. Naik's view, of an absorbing study of the New Hindu Woman of the post-Independence period. However, he critically adds:

"But Narayan's New Hindu Woman remains as unconvincing as the traditional Hindu wife in *The Dark Room*, since Daisy's changing reactions which alternate between cold indifference and tender self-surrender are not always adequately motivated."<sup>10</sup>

M.K. Naik is right in his comments pertaining to lack of motivation on Daisy's part for her frequently changing moods and postures. But such an idiosyncratic behaviour, portrayed by Narayan, may suggest the resultant outcome of the impact of modernity on the traditional social, moral and spiritual values, which constitute the well-entrenched system of the Indian society. Thus, a void is created due to the crumbling down of time-honoured habits and thoughts without an alternative set of new values to replace them. Hence, the result is incoherence and whimsically in behaviour.

Women undergo a series of sufferings, hardships and difficult situations threatening their personal honour also. But the intensity of their devotion to the cause keeps their morale high and emboldens them to confront and overcome whatever handicaps come in their way. Bharati's presence keeps Mahatmaji's message and principles resounding throughout the novel although he appears personally only twice. But the dominance of Bharati's personality is always felt during the course of the narrative.

Daisy's force of personality is likewise pervasive throughout the novel. Her tour through the villages sprawling around Malgudi on her mission of population-control and the tender feeling, she has, towards the downtrodden, underprivileged, illiterate villagers living in dingy, poverty-stricken conditions are reminiscent of her Gandhian thought. Bharati, too, in the company of her Master travels on foot through famine - stricken villages and her heart is touched by the misery, poverty and unhygienic conditions of villagers. Both these women dominate over their respective male counterparts, Raman, in case of Daisy and Sriram, in case of Bharati. They behave as a disciplinarian mentor to each of them respectively and enable them to come out of their self-woven cocoon, which is untouched and unsublimated by an intimate contact with harsh realities of life. The difference between the two lies in Daisy's being more aggressively individualistic as much as she considers marriage a symbol of woman's slavery to man. She is a votary of equality between man and woman, a concept underlying Women's Liberation movement. Her consent to marry Raman is attached with two conditions, which reinforce her die-hard conviction in maintaining a separate individualistic entity. Both of them occupy a pre-eminent position and the male counterpart is dwarfed into a weak and ineffectual figure. The protagonists like Daisy and Sarasa are the embodiment of a resurgent, self-confident and independent Indian woman. Modernity exerts its natural influences on the ambience of the Indian society

and changes the conventionally followed rules and values. The persistent hot pursuit undertaken by Sarasa for recovering her philandering, wandering husband is comparable to Savitri's dogged effort in following Yama, the god of Death, with unyielding pleadings to revive the dead body of her persuasion and her husband's corpse is put to life again. In the same way, Commandant Sarasa also succeeds in capturing her elusive husband but again loses him with no possibility of recovery for the second time. She, in the end, bows down to the inevitability of the situation. Sarasa's conspicuous qualities of sincerity, scrupulousness, love, regardfulness and human warmth towards her reclaimed husband despite his past global cheating, impostor's behaviour add luster to her personality. She embodies in her a harmonious combination of a wife's loyalty and faithfulness with sangfroid, self-dependence and tenacious struggle someness of a modern educated woman. Her imposing and dominating personality is much above the coward dishonest, immoral, feeble deceitful and debauching Rann. She has great antipathy with him and prays to God that one-day he might be arrested for all his hypocrisy may be for his passport frauds and made to spend the rest of his life in jail. Narayan says in his postscript to the novel:

"Prison life will have shorn him of his Adolphe Menjou style and three-piece suit, and no woman will even give him a glance, and he will have no where to go. At that point he will think of me, but he wont find

me. I am going away presently on a U.N. assignment to a developing country. Your friend won't know where I am gone. Nor am I going to leave my address with you since you are a talkative man and will not keep a secret."<sup>11</sup>

Woman is not lesser than man in any field of activity. Sarasa does not wail and sulk like Savitri in *The Dark Room*. In contrast to Savitri she faces all odd situations boldly and never feels helpless like a bamboo pole without the support and shelter of her husband's house. Shanta Krishnaswamy says,

"The issue of the woman, the woman torn between her career and her home, between her needs of nurturance and autonomy, between her pull towards modernity and her bias in favour of tradition and superstition – all these are present in Narayan's fiction"<sup>12</sup>

The author for all his settled inner equanimity is true to his craft – true enough to portray the double pulls that the Indian woman is subject to. She is torn between tradition and modernity, between Indian and western values and ways of living between her dignity as a human being and her duty as daughter, wife and mother, between marrying for love and marrying for the family, between her desire for autonomy and her need for nurturance. In each case she tries to settle finally for a compromise, however, heart-

breaking it may be, with the fervent hope that it would be operable given the rigid social co-ordinates. The author lets us feel that resignation and acceptance come naturally to the maturer, wiser woman of leading her to inner harmony.

## Notes

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3. Shakuntala Rao Shastri: Women in the Sacred Law (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1959) P. 171
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5. Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Pratima Asthana, Women's Movement in India (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. Bombay 1974, P. 9
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8. Ibid., P. 30
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10. M.K. Naik: The Ironic Vision : A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1983) P. 90
11. R.K. Narayan, Talkative Man, Postscript, P.4
12. Shantha Krishnaswamy: The Woman in Indian Fiction in English (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1983) P. 91

# **Chapter – 6**

## **Conclusion**

He is a novelist of popular appeal having both bulk and quality. His fiction mirrors his creativity as well as his eloquent development. His fictional career starting from *Swami and Friends* in 1935 to *The World of Nagaraj* in 1990. In all the phases of his writing he is the novelist of Malgudi. In the beginning it was a modest District Municipal town but in latter it has grown physically and enlarged with the period of time. The physical changes themselves are tokens of changes in attitude and outlook. It appears that Narayan involve himself with the sociology of the place in such a way that the characters themselves emerge as exponents of patterns and transition he associates with modern Malgudi. As Malgudi grows in time and changes in tune with advancement, it becomes a microcosm of far-reaching macrocosmic socio-economic changes in India. It correct what Vimla Rao says :

“The growth of his Malgudi is to be measured not by the expansion of the railway station or the increasing traffic in Market Street but by the transformation of the woman’s identity from a Savitri to a Daisy.”<sup>1</sup>

He is truly an artist and an exporter of ethos of South Indian middle class Hindu families in the background of Malgudi, which is not a place, but an experience of the soil and soul of India. Malgudi to him is not limited within the geographical limits but it is a mirror of time, which reflects the image of whole India. Narayan’s power of ironic vision lies in the individual



man and women, which is born in the world of Malgudi. This place is not microcosm but microcosm which combines the old and the new, the tradition and the modernity, the mood of the novelist and that of the contemporary society. Therefore, William Walsh writes,

“The Mysore of is personal life, the Malgudi of his novelist’s life becomes an intense and brilliant image of India itself.”<sup>2</sup>

Through his female protagonists the author has depicted the changing position of women in India from their traditional-bound ethos to their present position. The Dark Room provides a patent example of this social reality but his later fictions portray the other type of women- bold, courageous, confident and independent.

There are some artists who have created such lively, spirited and powerful characters with boundless potentialities that they are enplaned in our memory forever. These characters have their individual standing and existence independent of the works where they have been put. In R.K. Narayan’s novels, it is the characters that dominate the plot by giving movement and direction to it. Narayan has been successful in painting the delicate feminine characters with their tender sensibility, simplicity and powerful feelings. Women characters have tremendously great human potentialities, depth and profundity. Some of the women characters of Narayan are so touching and so remarkable for their innocence, and for their

underserved and unmerited suffering that our hearts are filled with the sense of deep sympathy and intense feelings towards them. Narayan has that keen sensibility, which visualizes each and every thing with keen insight, he has that vision by which he can see into the life of the things. He has superb imagination, which gives a golden colouring to worldly things. His novels are that branch of human life, which can be called the closest expression of human heart and mind, the expression of his feeling, thinking and convictions. His novels are the expression of life when we say it is the expression of life, we always means that it begins from man and ends with man. It is the vital record of all which man has encountered during the evolutionary process of civilization. If we collect the major events, incidents and happenings from the primitive stage of pre-history to the modern age of atomic research, supersonic aeroplanes, computers and industrial revolution, it will be the subject of history. But man is not a passive creature. The events and the incidents in the external world – can not remain without influencing his internal world, the world of thoughts; the eternal domain of his emotion and intellect.

Narayan has expressed his intuitive perception in his novels. He has also the desire of self-expression. He also wishes to confine us with what he thinks and feels and wishes to show his interest in human life, his interest in people and their doings through the art forms, the novels. He tries to give expression to his soul's desire – he looks before and after and expresses his

forbidden hopes, longings and all that happen in real life. He creates a new world to which he tries to give the semblance of reality by creating certain characters which live a life very much like us and through them he tries to express man's predicament in the universe. He tries to convince us with his own view of the universe and human life and conveys unthoughtful, unpredicted and illogical operation of natural forces, which crush several lives. This research is a humble attempt to trace the vivid sensibility, humans interest and emotional depth. He has successfully delineated various type of women characters in Malgudi. It is noteworthy that a number of novels such as *The Bachelor of Arts*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Sings*, *The Guide*, and *Talkative Man* are love- stories. He has vividly portrayed the frustrations in love, women is the worse suffer in frustrated love, as she is more emotional and sentimental than man. In the study of Narayan, the following things are of fundamental importance: (i) The influence of Narayan and early circumstances (ii) The influence of Narayan's environment.

The understanding of Narayan's early circumstances is important is so far as we can determine how these circumstances played a crucial role in building his sensibility. David Cecil puts it very correctly :

"First impressions are the most fundamental and the most durable . . . . the type of life and character to which people are brought up is the only type which

they understand instinctively. Their subsequent and mature view of human nature in general is always founded on this, the first example with which they came in to contact. Further, most people are intensely deceptive to experience only when they are young. It is then, that the impression's pierce down to the deepest stratum of mind where the seeds of the creative life lie hid."<sup>3</sup>

When we make a minute study of Narayan the man, we consider the various influences responsible for his emotional and intellectual shaping. His humble birth and his humble circumstances of life brought him closer to the man of humble status of society. His success as a writer may, thus be expressed as the creative use of the ordinary. There are other characteristics as well, which lend him a classic height. His is a 'human-toned and human-accented fiction, the power and vitality' of which remains almost inexhaustible. He is able to successfully paint the vivid sensibility, delicacy, tenderness, sweetness and submissiveness of women. We know that Narayan's aim was to depict the life in its most fundamental aspects. He aims at the exploration of the depths of the hearts of these rural people whose soul was not tainted by the fads of fashion and mechanicality of the material civilization. He aims at the presentation of that fortitude, patience and uncomplained endurance of the circumstances, which his characters had

to witness in the midst of the oppressive forces of nature. He found in women, this kind of stuff of the most by her traditionally submissive nature. By her delicacy, passiveness and mute-tolerance of the suffering; the woman evolves the deepest sympathy of our heart and she evokes in us the thought that lie too deep for tears.

History has been the witness of the fact that man has inflicted multitudinous injuries on women. He has been her tyrant who numbed her voice and who singled out her from the path of intellectual, moral and spiritual growth. Since long she is supposed to be an instrument of gratification of masculine lust and she was made cut-off from the main stream of life and from the world of action to play only secondary and subordinate role.

Most indo-Anglican writers are admirable for their representative of their characters. Raja Rao's novels are hero-oriented; so are Mulk Raj's novels. Women novelists have naturally a flair for female fictional characters. Anita Desi, Nayantara Sahgal delineates women with deep insider knowledge. Narayan is a really an artist without any bias he is as good at depicting women as at men. This why his fiction is a portrait gallery of characters occupying an important role in his novels not only in term of bulk but also in respect of sociological march of the place along with the changing times. It is, as Narayan displays, the role of women to translate and refine the rules of orthodoxy and correctness into codes and manners

covering the basic needs for food, shelter, sex and other requirement. His presentation of family life shows the elements of comedy and satire, tragedy and struggle between ambitions and achievements in the life of Indian families.

Narayan has portrayed a bewildering variety of women characters as grannies, middle-aged wives, unmarried girls, widows, deserted wives and independent women. If we scrutinized in a sequential manner, his novels are the representatives of the sociological march of Indian women from old traditions to a state of alteration. Through Savitri, Shanta Bai, Bharti, Rosie, Daisy and Dr. Rann's wife, Roja, Narayan focuses on the problems, potential and promise of show beyond doubt that freedom is at last becoming a part of national progressive awareness. Dr. S.P. Bhardwaj is correct in his view that Narayan has depicted in his novels two categories of women characters, quite different from each other in their attitude and nature. There are those for whom adherence to valued customs is a matter of daily course. Their devotion to accepted norms and principled domesticity is unquestioned. They are intrinsically instructed in their day to day observances by high ideals and the acquired lore of past. These women, whether treated as grandmothers or mothers or wives evince extreme forbearance, endurance and self-effacement even in the face of excesses done to them by their erring male counterparts. They are nothing more than a shadow of their male counterpart. Suffering is their badge. Only Savitri in *The Dark Room*

practices open defiance, but she is too weak to cherish such tantrum or rebellion for any length of time worth worrying. However, she does protest against male tyranny. To this set belong Savitri in *The Dark Room*, Sushila in *The English Teacher*, Sampath's wife and Srinivas's wife in *Mr. Sampath*, Meenakshi in *The Financial Expert*, Raju's mother in *The Guide*, Jagan's wife in *The Vendor of Sweets*, the grandmother of Swami in *Swami and Friends*, Natraj's wife in *the Man-Eater of Malgudi*, Raman's aunt in *The Painter of Signs* and Sita of *The World of Nagaraj*. Most of them are not identified by their names. They are known by their family relationships. To the other class of Narayan memorable women characters belong, Shanta Bai in *The Dark Room*, Shanti in *Mr. Sampath*, Rosie in *The Guide* and Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*, Bharti in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Sarsa in *Talkative Man*, breaks away the bonds of conventional Indian womanhood but she can not be categorized the with above mentioned protagonists because she is different from them in many ways. Some female protagonists have serious roles in his early fictions. In his very first novel *Swami and Friends*, the members of the family such as grand mother and mother have a limited role, they are arranged for background. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, the two stages are represented by Narayan, Chandran's students life, love affair and courtship. Here author has portrayed three women characters Chandran's mother, his girl friend Malathi and Sushila all these are conventional type by their nature.

Savitri is one of the few women in Narayan's novels who is the central character providing the main point of view. She is not a happy wife, she returns to her home in the end of the novel. She cares more for her traditional family existence and welfare than for personal happiness. The Dark Room is author's contribution to the great social question of the status of woman. This novel incorporates through man and woman, major and minor protagonists, some of various views of the time on the changing Malgudi and disharmonious family relationships. Savitri is not a modern woman but she gives vent to her protest against male tyranny and decides not to suffer quietly. Her journey after leaving home teaches her that a woman should be educated so that she may be economically strong or face the problems that occupied a fixed place in our society for ages. The Gandhian Movement of the 1930s, the period of this novel, had drawn into the public eye women from all strata of society who had so far led sheltered lives as had Savitri in the novel, The Dark Room. Their exposure to the powerful ideas of the time resulted in a growing demand for reform of their status and for a redefining of their role in Indian society. Narayan the novelist, aware of these trends, incorporated in his novels some of the various thoughts of the time on the changing status of women against a background of changing Malgudi and disharmonious family relationships.

Narayan's characters are predominantly men. So he assigns a secondary place to women in his novels. But Bharti of Waiting for the



Mahatma, Rosie of The Guide and Daisy of The Painter of Sings outshine their male counterparts and make a place for themselves. Shanty of Mr. Sampath is bold in starting but she too go back into conventionalism in the end. She even threatens to shave off her head, like a traditional widow. Bharti, Rosie and Daisy, thus, signify the traditional Indian womanhood. They are bold, educated, and independent and have no hesitation in communication with people. If we see them by another angle Bharti is dedicated to her work but she is also confused with her feelings for Sriram. In the same way Rosie surrenders herself to Raju's love but feels apologetic about it. She is not able to decide whether personal happiness is right or not. She is quite confused regarding the duty to follow her husband wishes. These female protagonists may be called modern women because they are not traditional type like others. They are known by their relationships with men other than their relatives. Such relationships are subtle and varied. These female protagonists are further recognized by the characteristic of modern culture, which cling to them. They at once create excitement in the environment by the enthusiasm, ambition and optimism they show for life.

Looked at from traditional point of view their imprudent ambitions and excitements put life into disarray for themselves and for others. If zeal and vitality give a temporary and horrifying meaning to their attempt at self-reliance, their disenchantment gives meaning to life itself. After a kind of deep somnambulism, they are restored to a chastened consciousness. With

only a single exception they all develop a studied dislike for the pursuits holding sway on their minds. In their case the mesmerism of modernity outweighs their inert willingness to follow tradition. There is a pensive vivacity in these dreamers of futile dreams. They may be called the first few iridescent flowers, empty of perfume, in the garden of that mixed culture which originated in the minds of the Britishers who thought of civilizing thereby the Indians. These female protagonists may be called professionals. They are put in a specific class their career-consciousness. Their potential urge to go ahead is surprising. They are more adventurous than sacrificing. The cardinal virtues of faith and service to family disturb them little.

The firmness and weakness of these careerists lie in their looking askance at the worthwhileness of existing taboos on women and in their vigorous search of a meaning. These women are used to highlight changes in the position of Indian women. The author has depicted them psychologically and has very eloquently presented their changing thought and attitude commensurate with the experience they earn during their struggle. In a number of cases these women face a deep sense of frustration during their adventurism. They are like an ill-punctuated script only with a sign of exclamation at the end.

All these careerists have come to Malgudi from outside. They are all victims of circumstances, great or small. But even so, none but they would have taken to such blandishment as they often indulge in. An orthodox lady

in Malgudi would have balked at the prospect of having to leave the house door to go on even such little errands as buying vegetables at the street corner. For instance Srinivas's wife in Mr. Sampath has to serve a poor meal because there is nobody to escort her to the vegetable-seller's shop at the street end for shopping. But these career-conscious women are singularly free from all restrictions and freely communicate with menfolk while engaged in jobs, public or private.

These women entered Malgudi for a specific purpose. Shanta Bai, Shanti and Daisy come in connection with job while Rosie is on a sight-seeing trip with Marco. Rosie too descends on the stage as a professional dancer. Sarsa comes to Malgudi in search of Dr. Rann. No sooner they make their presence in Malgudi than they arouse Malgudian inquisitiveness curiosity. To achieve success in career they stake their choicest possession of modesty and bring discredit upon themselves. All these women are, one way or another, uprooted from family or tradition or both. Yet tradition survives in them as an inherent instinct. After the bitter wrong in life, they are restored to the salubrious fold of family. After a 'crisis of consciousness' Shanta Bai in *The Dark Room* has left behind a home and a husband. She tell her story as:

"Well, here is my life story. I was born in Mangalore.

I was married when I was twelve to a cousin of mine,  
who was a gambler and a drunkard. When I was

eighteen I found he would not change, and so I left him. My parents would not tolerate it and I had to leave home... On the whole it has been a very great struggle. It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education. It doesn't improve their lot a bit; it leaves them as badly unemployed as the men."<sup>4</sup>

In the same way Shanti is a pretty young widow and, while coming to Malgudi, leaves behind a son under the care of others. Rosie gives up her role as a temple dancer and then deceives her husband Marco. Daisy revolts against the proposal for marriage because the family conditions allowing her no privacy. So she forsake family and tradition both. She is estranged from both, 'All individuality was lost in this mass existence'.

All these women are literate and well versed in manners. Their vehement dislike for and their temperamental maladjustment with, meaningless, orthodoxies may be traced to the effects of formal liberal education. If this education affects a broad outlook, it also breeds looseness in human affections. It gives impetus to hedonistic tendency and undeterred free communion between sexes. Shanta Bai has passed graduation degree examination from the women's college in Madras, and an aroma of that cosmopolitan city hangs about her. Shanti in Mr. Sampath is again a fastidious young lady, with a rich background of the westernized culture of

Madras. Rosie in the Guide is also M.A. in Economics and an excellent dancer. She is a star of the elite in society. Daisy in The Painter of Signs finds shelter with a missionary organization and passes her childhood and education life with the help of missionary. She has assimilated a lot of conventionality into her intellectual system.

Thus, Narayan's artistic sensibility adopts a set pattern of characterizing for these women careerists. This pattern may be termed thus: A modern, good looking and educated lady, cut off from family traditions and harassed by annoyances especially her own, moves into wider dimensions of the society in quest of her independent identity. Shanta Bai is responsible for the disquiet in Savitri's family life. Mr. Sampath thinks of marrying Shanti and put into disorder his wife and five children. Rosie is the cause of dissension between Raju and his old mother. Raman's aunt has to leave for Banaras so that Daisy and Raman may live in peace. Thus through his women characters Narayan has captured the changing position of women in India from their tradition bound ethos. The Sita-Savitri tradition in The Dark Room has given way to Rosie of The Guide, Daisy of The Painter of Signs and Sarsa of the Talkative Man. His women protagonists in a number of fictions have shown the dimensions of the individual potential of the Indian women. Yet it is obvious that Author is neither a champion of conventional values nor of modern values. He is a detached artist, the novelist as novelist. This is the reason woman in his writing have a hold in

the family and the scheme of life. A number of women characters of his early novels can be classified in Sita Savitri tradition. Savitri of *The Dark Room* is very much like her 'legendary namesake.' She is self-effacing and is dedicated to her family, silently without being especially unhappy. It is not the male cruelty that motivates her to cry out, it is that she can not tolerate her husband's illicit relationship with other woman. No woman would welcome adultery on the part of her husband. She can suffer other problems continuously but she will not tolerate a husband like Ramani, who freely carries on his sexual relationship with his colleague. But Narayan also displays the other angle of the picture because Sita Savitri tradition is not the only mythological tradition of Indian womanhood. There is also the Draupadi myth. The concept of 'the old woman' is the corroboration of the Sita-Savitri tradition whereas the 'new woman' finds her classical analogue in the Draupadi tradition of bold, assertive and independent womanhood. The mythological dimension of Daisy is fully worked out by Narayan with a pointed reference to the Mahabharata story. Narayan connects Daisy with Shakuntala, Damyanti and Ganga. Narayan says,

"He had explained to Daisy the five kinds of marriage he had read about and they had come to the conclusion that the system called Gandharva was the most suitable one of them; that was the type of marriage one read about in classical literature."<sup>5</sup>

Narayan's various types of women characters do not limited to the circumscription of local or provincial colour. Since, the symbolic dimensions of Malgudi and the ways of and thoughts of its people are universal and transcend the spatial details. It is right to say that what happen in India happens in Malgudi and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere. Narayan gives Malgudi its roots in the past and then displays the process of its development from the olden times to the end of the twentieth century. This period is marked by change. Narayan, however, is not only a social chronicler. With the passage of time Malgudian women moves and assumes a reality that may be compared with the place and time. Hence, the Malgudian women constitute a microcosm of the whole Indian social system. These female protagonists are simultaneously individuals and representative in the large perceptive. This is how Narayan, a skilful delineator of character, catapults an individual to the interweaving of a whole, unifying vision presented in his fiction. To classify all Narayan's female protagonists into any number of 'water-tight compartments' is not an easy work. Every woman has an individuality of herself despite the fact that they contain some common characteristics. No two of them are totally identical with each other in all respects. This is the reason why; they are true to life as no two individuals are thoroughly common in life. Besides, Narayan's way of characterization is real in conception and narration as he does not depict women in the traditional style of heroines who are totally

good and anti-heroine villains who are totally bad. Each of them are average human being, imbued with her own share of good or not so good qualities. A recurring thematic pattern in Narayan's fiction is presented in the 'juxtaposition of tradition and modernity'. Hence, the women-portraits presented in his various novels can be broadly evaluated on the basis of this yardstick.

Narayan says that the modern Daisy, though does not faith in any of the old customs, yet agrees to the proposal of Raman, conditionally. One, that they should have no children, and two, if by mistake one was born she would give the child away and keep herself free to carry on her social duties. She gives special importance to:

"Long ago I broke away from the routine of a woman's life. There are millions of women who go through it happily. I am not one of them . . . If you want to marry me, you must leave me to my own plans even when I am a wife. On any day you, question why or how, I will leave you. It will be unhappy thing for me, but I will leave you . . ."6

This conversation between Raman and Daisy has mythic implications. It calls up the story of Ganga, who is bold and authoritative. Narayan is an objective artist so he can not be called a social reformer or a feminist. His entanglement with the 'women question' is a result of his honest adherence



to the reflection of Indian reality through his imagery town Malgudi. Thus, Narayan's treatment with the 'woman question' is trustworthy both mythologically and sociologically. The modern woman has entered in India though she is not typical of the other Indian women. Narayan has proved himself as a novelist in representation of various aspects of Indian women and their development with time in personal and social life.

Narayan has certainly moved along with the times, and the change in his presentation of domestic life can be clearly seen when his two novels *The Dark Room* and *The Painter of Signs* are read side by side. But whatever form the family and social relationships may adopt, whatever shape the human beings may assume, there is in his characters a zest for life. All his characters return to vigorous practical life. *The Painter of Signs* upholds this affirmative view. Commandant Sarsa succeeds in searching for her husband at Malgudi with the kind support of Talkative Man but again he cheats her and flees with a nurse. She is shocked by his evasive actions still after all that she take care of herself and compromise with the circumstances as they are.

The later novels of R.K. Narayan make a group of novels, which show Narayan at the pitch of his art. The novels under consideration are: *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1977), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990) and *The Grand Mother's Tale* (1992). The major trend noticeable in these novels except the

last one as far as the women character's are concerned, is that traditionalism gives way to modernism. Ambika gives way to Grace in *The Vendor of Sweets*; the aunt leaves Raman's house for pilgrimage giving way to Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*. Sita in *The World of Nagaraj*, becomes broad-minded enough to let her daughter-in-law Saroja play at the harmonium throughout the day and be with her husband without doing any household work. Rita in *The Tiger for Malgudi* is already portrayed as a working woman, a circus artist. Roza of *Talkative Man* who doggedly follows her husband does more so in the vein of a watch dog than a chained dog. She is a police officer. Daisy is a devoted social worker. None of the earlier novels portray woman in such independent and daring occupations. Where as in these later novels the women characters succeeded in gaining their individuality and also asserting it. Bala in *Grand Mother's Tale* is a bold and assertive lady inspite of her ancient settings who brings back her beloved husband to her village.

His fictional re-presentation of the changing position of woman is in tune with the realistic picture of life. He is a sharp observer of the society around him. An attempt has been made in the thesis to analyze Narayan's treatment of women characters with a marked focus on his portrayal of the changing position of women in India through his microcosmic Malgudi. As pointed out by Narayan, he does have a philosophy regarding man – woman relationship but he is not a feminist. Nevertheless the presentation of women

characters especially in *The Dark Room*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Guide* and *The Painter of Signs*, expresses Narayan's growing engagement with the 'Woman Question'. His handling of the 'Woman Question' by focusing the emergence of women from stereo-type to authentic selfhood is part of his larger realism. His portrayal of women is a piece of life fictionally set down by the novelist. Narayan's presentation of the changing position of women in Malgudi is corroborated by the accounts given by sociologists who have written about Indian women. Although the main focus has been laid on women characters who signify change and the emergence of the new woman, almost all the women characters-major and minor, old and new have been taken into account because being an objective artist, Narayan can not be one-side and narrow sighted.

Narayan tells,

"In *The Dark Room* I was concerned with showing the utter dependence of woman on man in our society. I suppose I have moved along with the times. This girl in my new novel is quite different. Not only is she not dependent on men, she actually has no use for them as an integral part of her life. To show her complete independence and ability to stand by herself, I took care not to give her a name with any kind of

emotional connotation." . . ." I am calling her simply

Daisy. She is a very strong character."

Narayan as a realist has painted the big changes in status of women through his heroines. Sushila was an idealized image of womanhood in *The English Teacher*, Savitri was a victim of unkind circumstances and Shanta Bai a coquette in *The Dark Room* and Shanti was a fickle – minded actress in *Mr. Sampath*. These are all half – realized characters like Rosie who was painted in half tones being in the words of Raju. But the impact they created on the life of their male partners was indelible.

The condition of South Indian women attracts Narayan's attention and he depicts several social ills, which are still prevailing in society. In '*The Dark Room*' he shows how traditional Hindu housewife is tormented by a self-built husband who can go to the extent of gadding with other woman, throwing his whole commonsense to wind. The whole family environment is disturbed on account of Ramani's love affair with Shanta Bai. The arrival of film-industry in Malgudi disturbs the normal life of people in '*Mr. Sampath*'. Sampath flirts with Shanti and comes to grief at last. Sense or proportion is the key-note in the presentation of women's conditions in Narayan's novels. There are traditional type of women who are the embodiment of piousness, submission to domestic affairs, and consistency of outlook in respect of old Hindu culture of Sita and Savitri. On the other hand, there are rootless butterflies who feel a sense of pride in moving on the line of ultra-modern

women and have no hesitation in breaking the social norms. Savitri in 'The Dark Room' is contrasted with Shata Bai, Sampath's wife with Shanti, and Rosie, Rangi and Daisy appear to be alienated from the traditional domestic norms. The captain's wife in the recent novel is a close contrast to the hermit's wife. Narayan seems to insinuate that the western way of living has changed the attitude of young women like Rosie, Daisy, Shanta Bai and Saviti. Nevertheless, women are seldom ridiculed by the novelist who seems to believe that sexual permission or vulgar display of passion can not be the overall features of Indian women. Narayan's doctrinal resolve not to rely on man-woman relationship in his novels and short stories has remained as firm as a solemn pledge. He is very often compared with Jane Austen who with her two inches ivory', her pride and prejudice, her sense and sensibility, populate her novels with husband - hunting women. Narayan has got little of such problem to pray in his fiction. Hardy may have inspired him in regard to the portrayal of Malgudi but women in Wessex novels are too different to be compared with women of Malgudi novels. Sex is a dominating influence in Hardy's philosophy of life and there are almost a dozen seductions in his novels. But barring 'The Painter of Sings' in which Raman and Daisy lie together on a mat and perform the ritual willy-nilly, we have no seduction scene in the entire bulk of Narayan's fiction. Since Indian culture of the period of the 'Ramayana and the Mahabharat does not allow the overt play of sex if one says, Narayan signifies that child-bearing and child-rearing are

the chief functions of women in his novels. Shanti, Shanta Bai and Daisy are certainly exceptions to be found in his fiction. Savitri in 'The Dark Room' returned home because she finds bonds of love stronger than her sense of revolt. She is in agreement with her destiny to live in the Dark Room both at home and outside. She deserts her husband without any qualms of her conscience and is persistent in following the philosophy of Omar Khayyam : 'Dead yesterday and Unborn tomorrow.' As women in middle class families have a subsidiary role to play, Narayan presents them as they are. They have got no vital impact at least in matters of policies and programmes. In, The Vendor of Sweets, Jagan has partially accepted Grace as his daughter in law, through a sort of mental conflict is always there at the bottom of his mind. This conflict is intensified by the revelation that Grace is not properly married to his Mali and both are living in sinful union. From the standpoint of western culture no question may arise to object this sinful union of Mali and Grace but Eastern culture prevailing from time immemorial in Malgudian society is unable to tolerate it. Such aspects of Western culture in the matter of sex are humorous embodiment of the more penetrating questions that have considerably perplexed the Indians trying to adjust to the modern world.

The western culture has played havoc in the South Indian society in respect of overwhelming the old social values. The result is that well-establishment old institutions of family and marriage are badly affected. In

'The Dark Room' the western values arises from an opposite source of a feeling of operation. The natural sorrows and pains suffered by a tongueless creature as Savitri indicate how the housewife of a middle class family is compelled to dream of freedom and die heart-stifled in her den. She is able to adjust with her bully and licentious husband only when a part of her is 'dead'. The western mode of culture makes deep inroads in later novels, which present the study of money-hunting men of the world. Narayan shows how Indian society has been considerably influenced by the western way of living and leading life in similar way. In, *The Guide*, Rosie's involvement with Raju is the cause of her interest for dance and later making up an independent career. Horoscopic agreement was necessary in terms of marriage in south India. The earlier novels, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, have recurrent reference to horoscopic solutions before a marriage takes place. In 'The English Teacher' Krishnan's wife dies because their horoscopes were not in agreement and their marriage took place inspite of disagreement and deadly forecast. But in 'The Financial Expert' Margayya is ready to bribe the astrologer who can distort the horoscopic reality and enables him to get his son Balu married with Brinda, the daughter of a well-off family. This indicates a speedy decline in astrological faith of South Indian society to a great extent and its growing reluctance to temples, rituals and prevalent social conventions. The new wave of western culture brings a radical change in the dogmatic attitude to marriage so much so that

Sriram in 'Waiting for the mahatma' chooses a bridge for himself without in the least bothering about horoscopes and other prevailing formalities to be observed in marriage. Individuals like Sriram and Bharti could muster courage to throw off social traditions to winds.

Many of her characters find the real world too harsh, difficult unpleasant and also too complex. They withdraw from reality into their inner world and search there for ways and means of living through this hostile unknowable world. These characters are burdened by their uniqueness. They want to exercise their freedom, make a choice and refuse to conform or compromise in some cases. Their persistent search is for an authentic existence by bearing the role responsibility for their decisions rather than by appealing to the authority of custom or even their own past patterns of thought. There is intense questioning and the protagonists are torn between their search for authentic existence and the limitations of the human situation that prevent them from such realizations. Many of them find the ordinary routine of life boring and disgusting; full of whirlpools and long stretches of dreadful marshes. To accept life as it comes in routine is inauthentic existence and sign of awareness Narayan's protagonists who are peculiar and eccentric. They fight against the common place conformity and stick to their own vision of life. Those who manage to refuse the traditional norms, grow independent of their environment are saved from a total disaster. But they feel tormented by a sense of non-belongingness and find isolation inherent in



all human relationships, infact is due to the awareness of their individuality and freedom. They wish to exercise their personal choice and decision-making. The search for freedom from social value structure, a desire for an existentialist in conflict with their immediate human context as the society rejects their individuality conflict and tension are generated. Conflict arises from the lack of understanding with regard to their relationship either with things, or with people or, with ideas. It gives rise to anxiety overwhelming them all over. They do not follow the abiding values in social life. These modern women are well educated and independent however, they are prone to fears, anxieties and tensions, which push them towards despair. In their search for identity, independence and love relationship, they move to wards a state of alienation.

The female protagonists of Narayan are further burdened with the awareness of their femininity. Heirs of a culture where women have always been subjected to male dominated normative structures, these women struggle to attain freedom from these rigid moulds. These women protagonists seeks freedom through actions that are generally considered to be male progressive; Daisy- family planning programme, Bharti – freedom movement, Shanti- acting, Rosie - stage dancer, Saroja – singing, Sarsa – Commandant of Home Guards Women's Auxiliary these women transgress the fundamental social taboos against woman's pursuit of self- identity and independence. Some of them find grater tension and conflict with the people

close to them. But Narayan emphasizes the significance of these occupations, pursuits and tastes, as a part of women's search for identity. Author is more sensitive to the quest and tensions faced by women and their delicate nervous responses to these situations. These women characters struggle desperately to arrive at some image of a fulfilled self but their struggle for survival is wrought with great tension. His protagonists undergo a struggle to find their real self and because of the cramping pressures of anxieties, they lose it. They experience a disparity between the higher needs of the individual inner nature and the unalterable cosmic conditions of existence. Their personal and historical problems play a significant role in exaggerating their existential troubles. Those who are able to comprehend and surmount their personal difficulties gain a healthy vision of life.

Narayan is a great analyst of the human mind, a creator of brilliant characters, and an astute interpreter of life. He presents a gallery of vivid and realistic portraits. When we grasp his characters we visualize them as human with their weaknesses and potentialities. Their struggle to find a meaning in life symbolize the concern of a modernity with the eternal human situation which speaks of the changed perspective of Narayan in depicting characters. His freshness and spontaneity indicate his rich creative faculty. He creates a character in order to tell a tale and embody his vision of life. There is a rich vitality in an ordinary life, even some of her characters are free of spirits, who, dissatisfied with routine of ordinary world, break away from their

existing life patterns, only to realize that family and social ties can not be substituted.

Narayan's novels and short stories breath an aroma of the typical Indian life. This indianness is reflected in a content and form so identical as to grantee the artistry of the whole. The value system and point of view emerge in a different kind of narrative; plot structure, dialogue and characterization. The middle class people who populate his canvas mark his work as Indian from within and outside all the way. Narayan is seldom self-conscious, particularly unimitative in regard to western attitudes and styles seen in some of his contemporary writers – Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and V.S. Naipaul. He does not insist upon cause – and -effect psychology, the worldly humanism, affirmation of reality and importance of empirical things. Inspite of his focus of attention to see absurdity in human behaviour, he has a little sense of tragedy, no passion to reform the people and institutions. Narayan seems to consider that the novel is the least satisfactory form for dealing with social ills. And in this way, he differs from Mulk Raj Anand who reflects his passion to improve the society.

Herein lies the clue to Narayan's indianness. His characters are bewildered by the problems of existence and they get happiness and freedom only when the mundane world appears to them infact ultimately insignificant. For them the real world is the Eternal Static world of Absolute being, when they have been confined fully about the irrationality of the

worldly existence of human beings. It is then they come to realize that the man of wisdom, the sage is capable of viewing the turmoil of existence with serenity, detachment and tolerant amused, faintly, pitying curiosity, Narayan tries to fictionalize the permanent and transitional values through the comic and ironic mode of fiction. In this way, his fiction mirrors modern India deep-rooted in ancient traditions and caught up in the crucible of change. The Sarayu river, the Mempi hills, the Mempi forest, the caves and temples are depicted not just to compose the texture of the external landscape, they signify the elements of consciousness and deep-rooted, affirmative Indian vision.

The typical Indian protagonist of Narayan's novel begins as a fallen angel having a marked potential or an unconquerable will for the quest of truth. He evolves gradually the necessary vision. That is why, his characters move from experience to innocence. Swaminathan's Granny who, when her grandson disappears, prays to the God of the Thirupathi Hills for his safe return, and on his reappearance prepares to make offerings to the God 'to whom alone she owed the safe return of the child. Bharti seems to be in direct contrast with Sampath's wife in Mr. Sampath. Whereas Sriram is awed by her, Mr. Sampath gets impatient of his wife when she talks to him in signal from behind a curtain, as they had a visitor. Yet Bharti is not all that modern. She, too, is shy and demure when asked about her marriage. Bharti bowed her head and flushed and fidgeted. 'Ah that is a sign of a dutiful

bridge,' said the Mahatma (p.174). Thus we find in Bharti, an ideal, a girl who is almost perfect. She is independent, assertive, bold, can argue efficiently with men and win the conversation in her favour. On the other hand, she is beautiful, intelligent and smart. She has had a rigorous training in life, which has helped her to achieve her goals. Nevertheless she is soft-hearted, feels for the distressed women of her country. She is also a mother to about thirty children, and performs her duty towards them excellently. She is a true Gandhian and a devoted freedom fighter, who is ready to sacrifice her own love for the country or rather the Mahatma. Thus she has been portrayed as an almost perfect figure manner is Sriram's granny. As, Gaffur in *The Guide* compares the two types of women to the two types of bakes. He considers the old mechanical type of brakes better than the new hydraulic ones just as, 'an old, uneducated wife is better than the new type of girl'. Marco had not only ignored Rosie and taken her for granted but he was a big male chauvinist, too. When Rosie asks for permission for dancing, he not only cross questions her but insults her too, " Oh, you want to rival me , is that It? (P.130)

Traditionalism gives way to modernism. Ambika in the *Vendor of Sweets* gives way to grace the aunt leaves Raman's house to go to a pilgrimage in order to give way to Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*. Unlike her mother-in-law Sita in *The World of Nagaraj* becomes broad minded enough to let Saroja play at the harmonium throughout the day and have company of

her husband during day time. Rita in *A Tiger for Malgudi* is already portrayed as a working woman, a circus artist. Roja of *Talkative Man* who doggedly follows her husband, more in the vein of a watch dog than a chained dog, she is an officer in the police department. Daisy is a devoted social worker. None of the early novels portrays women in such daring occupations whereas, in all these novels the women characters succeed in gaining their individuality and also in asserting it.

In most of the novels of R.K. Narayan the male was the master and ruled in the house. But now in *The Guide*, 'The mastery passed' to Rosie. It meant to say that women have become more independent and can live without their co-partner, the man. No longer does she need an escort for going out. She is master of her own self. Here we are reminded of *The Dark Room*, an early novel of R.K. Narayan. The evolution of women from a mere slave that was Savitri to Rosie to whom the mastery passed is quiet clear. Though her husband had rejected Rosie, she has a guilty conscience but when Raju too has moved away from her emotionally, she is no longer the same woman who had come to Raju, to seek his help. She no longer needs any male by her side to survive.

"Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along."<sup>8</sup>

Savitri in *The Dark Room*, Swami's mother in *Swami and Friends*, Srinivas's wife or Sampath's wife in *Mr. Sampath* can not even think of daily moving out of the sanctuary of their own house. On the contrary, Rosie not only becomes independent, she also helps Raju by paying for his lawyer's fees by paying off all debts, which had mounted due to Raju's extravagant style of living. Savitri in *The Dark Room* too has a husband, similar to that of Rosie. Marco like Ramani, is over critical, arrogant and thinks of women as inferior to men. But Rosie is very different from Savitri. Both of them are rejected by their husbands. Savitri comes back to Ramani defeated, for she says,

“We are like a bamboo pole that can not stand by  
itself.”<sup>9</sup>

But Rosie repentant, and feeling guilty because of her affair with Raju, wishes to go back to Marco. However, she does not. Savitri, also did not want to come back to Ramani, but she did so for her children. Infact, it seems as if Savitri has evolved into Rosie. Similarly Rosie anticipates Daisy of *The Painter of Signs*. There is confusion in Rosie's mind. In the end we see that she treasures her husband's manuscript-despite the fact that he had cruelly rejected her. But there is no such confusion in Daisy's mind. Thus, we find Rosie can be considered to be the changing phase of women in India. Though confused, the woman is no longer ready to accept command over her in a masterly manner physically, nor is she going to let him tread

her emotional feelings. She is willing to break all bounds and shackles to attain freedom. No longer will she wait at hand, trying to please his highness, nor will she walk a step behind him to foster his ego. Now woman is considered equal to man. Rosie is an excellent example of such daring womanhood.

“It also becomes apparent in the analysis of Rosie’s animus that behind her ambition of becoming a great dancer lurks the strong urge to establish her individuality. Her inner being, it appears, is not prepared to go on playing the traditional role of a suppressed Indian wife for the rest of the life”<sup>10</sup>



## Notes

1. Vimla Rao: The Woman Question in R.K. Narayan (Littcritt, Vol. 6 June 1980) P. 14
2. William Walsh: R.K. Narayan - A Critical Appreciation (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1982) P. 59
3. David Cecil – Hardy the Novelist, P. 14
4. R.K. Narayan: The Dark Room (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 2000) P. 67
5. R.K. Narayan: The Painter of Signs (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1977) P. 158
6. Ibid., P. 159.
7. S. Krishnan: A Day with R.K. Narayan( Span: April 1975), P. 42
8. R.K. Narayan: The Guide (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1990) P. 199
9. R.K. Narayan: The Dark Room (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 2000) P. 189
10. Atma Ram: Perspectives on R.K. Narayan (Delhi: Bharat Prakashan, 1981) P. 142

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